

Responses to *M*A*S*H*, *Catch 22* and *Kelly's Heroes*: Developing a Method of
Investigating Changes in Discourse

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Abstract

The war-comedy films *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* are frequently discussed in academia as related to the anti-Vietnam War movement and the counterculture movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. *Kelly's Heroes*, also a war-comedy film released in 1970, and thematically similar to *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22*, is rarely discussed as such.

This research suggests that the relationship these films have with the Vietnam War may be overstated, misrepresented or more complicated than previously thought. In examining this relationship the research presented here explores a methodology which seeks to trace changes within the critical and academic discourses which surround the three films.

Rather than assessing and attempting to understand the film texts in isolation, this thesis assesses the (often changing) meanings that have been associated with them since they were released, to provide a more holistic expansive understanding of their perceived position in North American culture.

To do this a method was developed that sought to contextualise and analyse the reviews, marketing material and newspaper articles related to the films. This method, which focusses on what was written about the films rather than analysis of the films themselves as a way of exploring how they were being perceived, draws upon the relationships which exist between these texts, placing them in context both with each other and the wider cultural milieu.

The research traces changing perceptions of the films' genres, the relationships between the values associated with them and their positions in the film canon, and the impact of events ancillary to the films on the ways they have been understood. It shows

that it is possible to demonstrate how certain ways of understanding the film texts came to dominate the discourse which surrounds them, demonstrating the viability of, and value in, longitudinal tracking of discursive trends.

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Introduction

The American public and its political leadership will do anything for the military except take it seriously. The result is a chickenhawk nation in which careless spending and strategic folly combine to lure America into endless wars it can't win. (Fallows, 2015)

The focus of the article quoted above is the US military and its relationship with aspects of US foreign policy. It includes commentary on military spending, supply chain complexity and politics. In this data heavy context, replete with info-graphics, statistics and maps, the inclusion of a discussion of the film *M*A*S*H*, ("Robert Altman's 1970 movie *M*A*S*H* was clearly "about" the Vietnam war, then well into its bloodiest and most bitterly divisive period." (Fallows, 2015)) a fictional depiction of a mobile army surgical hospital set during the Korean War, as well as numerous other fictional depictions of the military, including *Catch 22*, perhaps seems incongruous.

However, when it is noted that the article begins by discussing changing public attitudes towards the military, the references to these films begin to make more sense. They are explicitly understood to be artefacts of that public opinion:

The difference between the earlier America that knew its military and the modern America that gazes admiringly at its heroes shows up sharply in changes in popular and media culture (Fallows, 2015).

Whilst it is unclear as to whether Fallows believes that these texts are a reflection of public opinion, or if they are shaped by them, it remains that the fictional representation of the military is seen as absolutely entwined with perceptions of its real world counterpart. They are viewed as connected to such a large extent that those texts are here seen to represent the American public at large. Within this, the sense that the Vietnam War remains a pivotal moment in American history is strong here. For Fallows it marks a point at which the public attitudes towards the military began to change,

clearly signalled by a corresponding change in the fictional texts which depict that military.

The way in which the article is structured serves to identify a number of real world tangible issues as arising, at least to some extent, out of changes to the North American public's perceptions of the military. These changes are seen to have occurred over the last half century. That these changes are identified in, and articulated through the use of popular films and novels serves to demonstrate the continued cultural significance of those texts, and the parts of American history to which they are perceived to pertain.

The research presented in this thesis is concerned with some of those texts and their relationship with the Vietnam War. It aims to trace the path which leads to them being referenced over fifty years after their release in an article which is ostensibly about the American military.

The starting point for this enquiry was an investigation into the extent to which the marketing for *M*A*S*H* employed anti-war imagery which related to the Vietnam War. The hypothesis was that the film contained a certain amount of anti-war rhetoric, which through the use of associated counterculture¹ imagery became a central feature of its marketing. This hypothesis is underpinned by the notion of *M*A*S*H* as an anti-war film, an assumption made because this is one of the primary ways in which the text is understood and discussed in recent academic work, as well as writing which appears in

¹ The term counterculture is used extensively throughout this work, and it should be noted that in this context it refers to the North American counterculture of the 1960s...and early 1970s. Whilst the boundaries of this counterculture cannot be satisfactorily demarcated it is here understood, broadly, as a sub-culture that operated around the notion of progressive and idealistic attitudes towards a range of social issues in North America, including the war in Vietnam, civil rights, feminism and sexuality. Perceptions of the counterculture of the 1960s are discussed later in the introduction.

magazines such as that discussed above, newspapers, documentaries, and other texts concerning the film. Whilst undertaking that research it became apparent that there was clear evidence that the marketing made use of counterculture imagery; however, there was far less evidence in the film itself of the anti-war rhetoric which was assumed to have informed that marketing.

The hypothesis appeared to be only partially correct. Alongside this apparent discrepancy between a direct reading of the film, and the widely accepted understanding of it as anti-war, there also appeared to be little or no acknowledgement of an explicit connection with the Vietnam War or the anti-war movement in *critical* work published immediately after the release of the film. Whilst there is plenty of evidence of *M*A*S*H* being related to the Vietnam War and read as an anti-war text from later in 1970 (it is these sources which are invariably cited as evidence of critics engaging with the film in this way) at the very least it seemed that the critical community were not initially reading the film in this way. For instance, Roger Greenspun, writing for the New York Times relatively soon after the release of the film, states that “*M*A*S*H* makes no profoundly radical criticism either of war or of the Army” (Greenspun, 1970). Only one of the reviews published during the month after the release of the film that this research uncovered mentions the Vietnam War, and this is to note only that it is different to the Korean War, which ostensibly serves as the setting of *M*A*S*H*: “[the Korean] War, not so much absurd, but ridiculous, denied my own truly lost generation both the tumultuous heroics of the Second World War, and the tumultuous anti-heroics of Vietnam” (The Village Voice, 1970:32) There is an obvious juxtaposition here between the assertive, unequivocal statement reproduced at the beginning of this chapter, that “*M*A*S*H* was clearly “about” the Vietnam war”. It appears that this was far less ‘clear’ for critics writing about the film at the time of its release.

The view that *M*A*S*H* was somehow about the Vietnam War is ubiquitous in academic work. For example, Hehr, in his discussion of the film undertaken in a chapter titled “*War Films – Vietnam as an Open Wound*” argues that “[director] Robert Altman hides his criticism behind parody by showing the war from the point of view of a group of doctors in a military hospital in the Korean War”(2003:59). Hehr also discusses *Catch 22* here, understanding the films together as treating the Vietnam War “satirically, or as slapstick comedy, making fun of American militarism and army customs and thus seriously questioning the American sense of self-worth”. The audience, and critical community are not seen as factors this discussion, the criticism of the war in Vietnam is crafted by the director alone, and clearly identifiable in the film. Effectively, the films are understood here, and in a number of other academic studies discussed later in this introduction as related to the Vietnam War without the ambiguity or hesitation that would seem appropriate when paired with a critical voice contemporary to the release of the film, such as that of Roger Greenspun.

This serves as an example of a more widespread disconnect between a way of understanding and discussing the film which appears frequently in academic work and the way in which a significant quantity of evidence suggests reviewers were discussing the film. As evidenced above, this disconnect is not unique to academic work concerned with *M*A*S*H*; but can also be seen in relation to *Catch 22*, which was released the same year. The tendency to link the two films is pervasive, of the twelve mentions Gehring makes of *Catch 22* in *American Dark Comedy* (1996) at least half also refer to *M*A*S*H*. The films together are often seen as “addressing some aspect of America’s involvement in Vietnam” (Lucia, et al. 2012:14). However there is little evidence in the contemporary reviews to suggest that this was the sole or even dominant way in which critics in 1970 were discussing the films. Equally problematic is the way in which there *is* evidence that the critical community was discussing them in quite disparate ways, undermining the link which is frequently drawn between them.

The third film this research is concerned with, *Kelly's Heroes*, was released in the USA on almost the same date as *Catch 22*. Donald Sutherland, who starred in *M*A*S*H* plays a tank commander in the film, a character that was widely discussed by critics at the time as having connections with the counterculture movement. There is also evidence within the reviews of the film that it was viewed as an attempt by those who made and marketed the film to emulate the box office success of *M*A*S*H*. In spite of the critical discussion of the film in this respect, there is little academic work which discusses the film's potential relationship with the counterculture. Again there is a disconnect between the concerns of the critical community and the focus of the academic community. This manifests as a failure to draw *Kelly's Heroes* into the debate about the relationship between the counterculture, the anti-war movement in the 1970s and film, when there is evidence that would mark this as a potentially useful intervention.

Unravelling and addressing the ramifications of these two inconsistencies between the majority of the academic work and some of the reviews written at or within months of the release of the films encompasses notions of dominant paradigms, the ways in which discourse operates, and the influence of the critical community and its relationship with academia.

As such, this research contributes to the corpus of work concerned with analysing cultural and societal reactions to the Vietnam War, as both a significant event in American history and one which still has ramifications for, and relevance to contemporary US society. This contribution takes the form of an attempt to understand and address a key issue with the accepted history of some of those texts which have (or have not) come to have been seen as reactionary, and have subsequently been understood as particularly significant. Beyond this though the work asks questions about genre, perceived worth and the film canon which are of relevance to film

historians more broadly. Therefore this introduction represents an attempt to highlight and contextualise these notions, relating them to existing academic work concerned both with the films, and with work which helps to develop the methodological framework within which the research is completed.

Understanding *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* – Recent Textbook Examples

As it is used throughout this introduction, and throughout this work as whole, before going further it is necessary to explore the way in which this research conceives of the notion of an ‘understanding’ of a text. Primarily this refers to the action of attaching some sort of meaning to the film text. This can, in some cases mean the process of a viewer identifying within the film a set of codified meanings which are interpreted (by them) in a particular way. A prudent example is the frequency with which discussions of the films discussed in this research forward the notion of the films as having or conveying an anti-war or anti-Vietnam war message. However, the films could also be understood to have something to do with the Vietnam War without viewing specific textual aspects as the source. This does not require the same degree of engagement with the films as isolated texts and as such does not require that relationship be conceived of in the same sort of coherent fashion. This is perhaps most evident when discussing the types of recent academic works addressed below. They assert that the films are related to the Vietnam War or counterculture movement, but seem far less likely to relate those assertions to elements of the texts themselves, or even provide evidence that other people were (or are) reading the films in that way. This could simply be a consequence of way in which most of these recent works are primarily written for the purpose of reference rather than in depth discussion. However it would also seem logical to suggest that there is a relationship between similar readings being frequently and consistently made of a given text, and how it is then understood and discussed in other contexts, even those which do not make direct readings. This relationship could also be closely tied to the canon, with certain films being discussed

more frequently than others, in turn leading to a perpetuation both of their perceived importance, but also of certain key readings being more frequently made, and a particular way of understanding the film developing.

An example of this may be found in the introduction to the third volume of the *Wiley-Blackwell History of American Film*, published in 2012. Under a section headed 'the New Hollywood' it is stated that "in some cases [commercial cinema] represented anti-war sentiments in films about other wars – *Catch 22* (1970), set during World War II, *M*A*S*H* (1970), set during the Korean war" (Lucia, Et al. 2012:14). *M*A*S*H* is mentioned again in the introduction to the fourth volume of the history, here under the heading "A Socially Engaged Cinema". Here it is argued that the film can be understood as "addressing some aspect of America's involvement in Vietnam" (Lucia, et al. 2012:14) despite it not explicitly dealing with that war. The presence of *Catch 22* and *M*A*S*H* in two introductory chapters to work which is concerned primarily with exploring a historical narrative of American film would appear to support this. Clearly they are perceived to be important examples, perhaps because the authors of these works relate them to a particularly traumatic aspect of American history or, perhaps, because the authors are drawing on a longer history of making that connection.

David Cook's work, *Lost Illusions: American Cinema in the Shadow of Watergate and Vietnam*, is similar to *The Wiley-Blackwell History of American Film* in that it presents an expansive history, serving again primarily as a reference work. In it Cook argues that *Catch 22* was "spiked with anti-war rhetoric" whilst "[t]he anti-Vietnam subtext was even clearer in ... 20th Century-Fox's revisionist "combat film" *M*A*S*H*" (Cook, 2002:163). Cook understands the 'anti-war rhetoric' and '[a]nti-war chic' of *Catch 22* as a potentially cynical plan to boost the film's youth appeal and increase box office revenue, despite how the film, it is argued, "had next to nothing to say about Vietnam" (Cook, 2002:165). Here the two films are again linked through a perceived shared

relationship with the anti-Vietnam war movement and the counterculture, in spite of the motivation behind the forging of this relationship being seen as potentially commercially motivated.

The references to *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* in these two works are notable in their brevity. Both are concerned with placing the films in context with works which are perceived to be thematically similar as well as placing them within an overarching narrative of the history of film. Cook (2000) understands *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* with a genre categorisation, as youth cult films whilst *The Wiley-Blackwell History* cites them as products of the “New Hollywood” (Lucia, et al. 2012:13). This refers to a relatively ambiguous set of associations comprising of a group of directors, concerns and styles which have been used as the starting point or have perhaps arisen out of a number of academic studies. In *Lost Illusions and The History of American Film*, *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* do not simply enjoy status as canonical examples of youth culture and new Hollywood films, they are seen as exemplary within those categories. They are key and archetypal examples of Hollywood engagement with the anti-war and counterculture movement released during the Vietnam War itself.

Frequent references are made in this thesis to the type of text book discussions of the films presented in these sources. Together, they are referred to as examples of the current, dominant, and academic understanding. This term refers primarily to the relatively recent publication of these sources (since 2000) but also serves to demarcate them as examples of discussion where there is very little evidence presented to support the claim that these films were, or are, related to the counterculture movement. The references to the films here comprise authoritative statements about them rather than analysis. Both of the examples here are found within multi-volume reference works, perhaps inherently a framework which necessitates the author occupying a position wherein the way in which the films are understood, and by extension the

categories they occupy, must be assumed to have been previously discussed and analysed. Because this way of discussing the films does not include evidence or analysis it can be seen to assume that the ways in which these films are understood in modern academia is set, solid and unchanging, and that these reference works are the culmination of the work in the area and the ultimate authoritative conclusion. Inherent within this is the implication that there is perpetuity to this particular way of understanding *Catch 22* and *M*A*S*H* in that they have always been understood in this way and that, perhaps, they always will.

The Canon and Social Worth

Mark O'Day's description of *M*A*S*H* is similar to many other works published since the millennium in its understanding of the film as an "anti-war satire ... which captured the zeitgeist of late sixties countercultural anti-establishment and anti-Vietnam sentiment" (O'Day, 2015:304). Working through earlier academic and critical approaches to the film it becomes apparent that there may be a relationship between how important the Vietnam War, as a significant event in American history, is perceived to be and the frequency with which *M*A*S*H* is referred to in that work. Beyond this, the film may be seen as more culturally valuable because it is associated with an important event in history. This notion of cultural value, and the frequency with which the film is referred to, is potentially a key aspect of its position in the film canon. Of equal importance is the context in which discussion of the film takes place. For instance, O'Day's description of the film appears in the book *Fifty Hollywood Directors*. The text on the back cover of which begins: "Fifty Hollywood Directors introduces the most important, iconic and influential film makers..." (Leonard, Tasker, 2015). Altman's inclusion in that pantheon, as well as in a number of other such works (Eagan, 2009) (Roman. 2009), and the publication of a number of books focused entirely on his practice, is indicative of his perceived position as an important director. He can effectively be understood as a canonical director of canonical film(s) (Thompson, 2006)

(Altman, Sterrit, 2000) (Keyssar, 1991). To argue that *M*A*S*H* would be viewed differently had a different director been involved or to argue that Altman would not be viewed in the same way had he not directed *M*A*S*H*, is impossible but this impossibility demonstrates the extent to which the two notions, that of the reputation of the director and the reputation of the film, are linked in terms of their position in the canon.

However, the reputation of the film maker is far from the only factor contributing to the position of a film in the canon. For instance with *Catch 22* the novel upon which the film is based may have played a key role. Whilst the novel sold steadily, it did not at any point achieve a degree of success or sales that would see it placed within the *New York Times*' best seller list. (Plimpton, 1986). However, the novel increased in popularity throughout the sixties to the extent that in 1969 Nora Ephron is able to state that "the novel, after a slow beginning and mixed reviews, has become a modern classic, with a Modern Library edition and 2 million paperback copies in print". Whilst the importance and ramifications of the success (or even existence) of the novel to reviewers of the film is explored in the third chapter of this work, it should be noted here that the novel and its popularity is almost universally acknowledged within the critical sphere either with relatively unambiguous phrases like "[b]ased on Joseph Heller's bestselling novel" (Spokane Daily Chronicle. 1970:28) or as a starting point for more in-depth comparative discussions (Ebert, 1970). The novel's position in the canon is also potentially tied to this notion of increased academic engagement, and cultural worth, the novel carrying with it its own set of associations and relationships.

Cartmell and Whelehan note that "literary scholars found even more to dislike about cinematic adaptations of canonical texts" (Cartmell, Whelehan, 2010:41) than non-canon ones, demonstrating the perceived importance, at least amongst literary scholars, of the canon, and a heightened attachment to the texts which are seen to

comprise it. Cartmell and Whelehan argue that this attachment arises out of a sense of the intellectual differences required in both the making of, and consumption of, the literary text and the film text. This in turn is related to class, the film adaptation as a form for the illiterate working classes, existing at the expense of the high-brow, literate original (Cartmell, Whelehan, 2010:47). Whilst the canon is implicit within this discussion one need only look at the (absence of) canonical value placed on that opposite genre, the novelisation of popular films, to see that not all literary works carry the same cultural weight. This raises issues of the value associated with certain cultural utterance and the potential for the literary canon, of which *Catch 22* is arguably a part, to be viewed as analogous to, or related to, the film canon. For some there would appear to be little difference. McLaughlin calls *Catch 22* “[a] ground-breaking experiment in form and characterisation and an anti-war manifesto that was revered in the Vietnam era. Joseph Heller’s *Catch 22* (1961) has become a contemporary Classic” (McLaughlin, 1999:248). Significantly, he refers to *Catch 22* as a unified text, making reference to neither novel nor film in isolation, but understanding both as one. For others though the differences between the two may be a key aspect of their discussion and understanding. The difference, noted earlier between the anonymous review which appears in the *Spokane Daily Chronicle* (1970:28) and Roger Ebert’s (1970) *New York Times*’ discussions of the films, is a potential manifestation of this debate in action. For one the success of translation from novel to screen is of utmost importance; for the other that the film is a bestselling novel is a simple positive. That simplicity versus a more in depth discussion is again linked to a whole range of assumptions that the writers of those articles (and the newspapers in which they are published) will have about their readers; such as their social class, or the extent to which their education has prepared them to engage in such debates and how enjoyable that engagement may be.

There are a number of other issues tied up with the film's translation from novel to film, the position of the book as satire and the potentially heightened sense of cultural worth attached to that mod, as well as the fact that the publication date of the book coincides with a sharp increase in the number of American troops in Vietnam in 1962. Chuck Thegze, for example, is concerned primarily with the translation of the book to the screen (1970:16). Thegze discusses the issues which the film makers faced whilst writing the shooting script. He explores the difficulty of matching stylistic concerns, humour and simply the length of the book with the feature film format. He draws on interviews with screenplay writer Buck Henry and director Mike Nichols as well as his own analysis of the novel to conclude his discussion by attempting to address the "ultimate" question "what is Catch-22 about?" Thegze quotes Henry:

I don't think Joseph Heller realized he was predicting the future, but there is just one thing after another in the novel which in the past seemed to be outlandish and insane extrapolations on normal human behaviour, and now have become par for the course. Thus, a lot of Catch-22 is hardly as radical as it was. It has been removed from the framework of fantasy and tied to things that really happen- like Vietnam. (Thegze, 1970: 16)

Following this quote Thegze ties a key difference between the novel and the film (the main character Yossarian receiving a medal because he chooses not to bomb civilians rather than bombing a bridge as he does in the novel) to the Vietnam conflict. Again Henry is quoted "For instance, what are they told to do in Vietnam? A guy gets in a plane and they say, 'Drop this ton of napalm in that field over there.'" (Thegze, 1970: 16). The moral choice Yossarian makes when deciding whether or not to bomb civilians is understood as having parallels with the decisions that a pilot flying during the Vietnam conflict might make. The film maker (Henry) is presented, in effect, as positioning Yossarian as an allegorical stand-in for the Vietnam era pilot. It is argued

that the film is a direct allegory for the experience of those fighting in Vietnam. Beyond this, by arguing that because what was fantastical for Heller has since become part of the everyday reality of the Vietnam conflict, the film as a whole can be seen as equally representative of the conflict at large.

This is seen as a relatively direct and clear condemnation of war; however, this aspect of the plot is also understood as operating as satire because Yossarian subsequently receives a medal for his actions despite clearly disobeying orders. The incident is seen to depict the military as a ridiculous and incompetent bureaucracy whilst the awarding of the medal validates Yossarian's actions. Significantly, whilst this quote appears in an academic discussion of the film which seems to be arguing a clear link between the film version of *Catch 22* and the Vietnam War, the voice that makes this link explicit is not the author's own, it is that of the film makers. Ultimately Thegze chooses to exclude a connection to Vietnam by refactoring the film maker's words: "[i]n other words, the film *Catch-22* is about a single crazy fool who, in all the nightmarish senselessness he was experiencing, finally decided to draw the line." (Thegze, 1970:17). Thegze's answer to the question of what *Catch 22* is finally 'about' removes references to Vietnam and even explicit links to war, understanding the film as one man's individual stand against senselessness.

Similarly, a high percentage of the other academic discussions of the film published within five years of its release, especially those which are published before the tendency to relate it to *M*A*S*H* becomes dominant, do not make explicit a link between *Catch 22* and the Vietnam War. This is not to argue that *Catch 22* was not being understood this way by academics at all, but to demonstrate the difference between the studies mentioned here and those which become pervasive from the early 1980s. Studies such as Roundy's *Images of Vietnam: Catch-22, New Journalism and the Postmodern Imagination* (Roundy, 1980), or Maland's drawing of parallels between

Catch 22 and *Dr Strangelove* (the two "appearing at roughly the same time as other works which were critical of the dominant paradigm - *Catch 22* is a good literary example of the stance" (Maland, 1979:697)), are works which explicitly understand *Catch 22*, the film and the novel, as related to the Vietnam war.

In a work published in 1990, Steve Neale and Frank Krutnik use *M*A*S*H* to illustrate the difference between parody and satire; the former relying on aesthetic conventions and the latter on (opposition to) social ones.

*M*A*S*H* uses the democratic and humanitarian values in whose name the war in Korea (and of course, by analogy, Vietnam) is being fought, as a set of self-professed norms against which to measure the undemocratic and inhumane practices both of the American military and governmental establishments, in particular, and of war itself in general. (Neale, Krutnik, 1990:19).

It is argued that by juxtaposing the reasons for which war is fought with the actual act of fighting, the latter is seen to be incompatible with the former. War is fundamentally seen to be an undemocratic and inhumane action. The assertion that the Korean and Vietnam Wars were fought in the name of democratic and humanitarian values appears as opposed to those wars which were fought in direct defence against invasion, or in the face of danger to the American people on home soil, specifically WWII. Those joint tenets of the protection of democracy and humanity are very specifically seen as applicable to the war in Vietnam or Korea as conflicts which posed no direct immediate threat to the American people, regardless of the perceived dangers of the spread of socialism. As in many other academic discussions of *M*A*S*H* the film is related directly to the Vietnam War. The use of "of course" signalling the sense that it would seem almost counter-intuitive to not make such an association. It is perhaps because the two wars have so much in common, in their visual representations in film, ideologically, temporally and geographically that such associations become possible.

Equally because the concept is applied to 'war in general' as well as those conflicts specifically the film becomes a commentary on a particular type of war, an ideologically based involvement on an international scale which arguably remains prescient in modern Western society.

This prescience marks the film as perhaps representing something more than entertainment. This notion of entertainment and its relationship with perhaps social purpose, or even more hazily, meaningfulness, is difficult to quantify. Richard Dyer, acknowledging that it is without nuance, 'sketches' entertainment as "the string of short items with or without linkman, the popular and vulgar reference, the implicit sexuality and open sentimentality – from the development in the pubs and clubs patronized by the urban working class" (Dyer, 1992:7). Citing representatives of both the BBC and ITV serves to underline this definition and provide a contemporary context. These representatives differing attitudes to both the ostensible purpose of (entertainment within) the networks they work for, alongside the plethora of cultural and social implications of the 'popular, vulgar, sexuality and sentimentality' and the more explicit 'working class' demarcation marks entertainment as a notion that is understood to be positioned very specifically at the lower echelons of a number of differing but related hierarchies. Regardless of how it is conceived to manifest, the sense that *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* inherently serve some social purpose places those texts within those same hierarchies, conceivably, at the opposite (higher) end to entertainment. Especially assertions such as screen writer Buck Henry's- that *Catch 22* can be understood as relating directly to the Vietnam war, relies on a conception of the film as transcending its role as entertainment. There is a particular way in which the film is supposed to be read and that reading reveals it to contain, to use again slightly unsophisticated terminology, an important social message - here, that war is negative. The film becomes a vehicle for the message. The message becomes an integral aspect of the film because it is an unavoidable consequence of its satirical make up, as well as its

potentially allegorical message. The language used by academics such as Neale, Krutnik and Maland is reminiscent of that used in some academic discussions of the novel.

The humour of *Catch-22* is not the gentle entertainment of comedy but the harsh derision and directed social attack of satire. Unlike comedy, which depicts failures or excesses of basic human nature, the satire of Heller's novel is selective, hitting out against definable groups within American society and creating a unified front against a corrupt and ridiculous enemy (Nagel, 101:1974).

Nagel's discussion of *Catch 22* is explicitly framed as an attempt to address the genre of the novel. It asks, "[w]hat is funny about it, what are the implications of such humour, and what are the generic associations implicit in its form" (Nagel, 99:1974). Within this, satire is clearly viewed here as intrinsically linked to social commentary. Moreover, this gives it a form of superiority over 'comedy', which is seen as nothing more than entertainment. For Nagel the genre of the novel is inextricably tied to a sense of it as having some social purpose. It is perhaps then that Neale and Krutnik, writing 16 years after Nagel, were tapping into a long tradition of discussing *Catch 22*, in any of its forms, in this way. This would rely on an extremely strong perceived relationship to exist between the film and the novel. Whilst the research undertaken here does not have the same aims as Nagel's, it does ask what effect the perception of the novel as satire, and by extension social commentary, might have had on the film at the time of release.

What is apparent in the discussion of *Catch 22* and *M*A*S*H* presented here is that regardless of how it comes about, either because their connection with the Vietnam war or because of their status as adaptations of novels, they are regarded as important texts worthy of analysis. This is especially obvious in the way they are discussed in

recent academic work almost as the standard texts to draw upon when discussion of the relationship between popular film and the Vietnam War is prudent, as it must become in any American film history that encompasses that conflict temporally.

This perceived sense of importance is far less evident in discussions of *Kelly's Heroes*. This may, in turn, have meant that the scope of those discussions in terms of both the conclusions they draw about the film, and the approaches taken, is far wider. For instance, Richard Maltby, in his review of *Doherty's Projections of War* notes that it may be:

illuminating to consider in more detail how Vietnam-era representations of World war II- *The Dirty Dozen* or *Kelly's Heroes* for example – were inflected by their contemporary context (Maltby, 1995:54)

Maltby does not argue, as much of the work on *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* does, that *Kelly's Heroes* is allegorically concerned with the Vietnam War but suggests that potentially there are aspects of it which could be viewed as especially cognate with it. The phrasing allows the analysis to be of far more than the extent to which the film can be seen as a critique of war. This is potentially because the connection here is seen to have more to do with immediately accessible aspects of the films, such as the anachronistic appearance or speech of the 'Oddball' character rather than a sense of it being made with the express intention of commenting on the Vietnam War or war in general. These types of associations are prevalent to a far larger extent in work concerned with *Kelly's Heroes* than that concerning *M*A*S*H* or *Catch 22*. For instance Strong's analysis of what he terms "team films" (2008:44–57) uses the film as an example of that genre which arises out of the late 1960s.

"[A] period ... likely to be associated with a changed zeitgeist and altered audience tastes as a result of counter-cultural politics, growing U.S. disenchantment with the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights movement. *Kelly's Heroes* (Hutton, 1970) is an

interesting team film in this regard; although set in World War II, its central narrative premise (a multifarious platoon go AWOL to steal Nazi gold) belongs to the liberal norms of a later period, and Donald Sutherland's turn as proto-hippie tank commander 'Oddball' comprehensively and anachronistically skews the diegetic world away from period realism and into comic resonance with the era of its production" (Strong, 2008:47)

The description demonstrates that in a context where *Kelly's Heroes* is being discussed in terms of its genre it is understood as carrying a set of counterculture associations, more so in that, here at least, the discussion of how these connections manifest actually precludes discussion of it as a 'team film'. Whilst the film's inclusion is determined by its apparent status as a team film it is notable only because of its relationship with "counter-cultural politics, growing U.S. disenchantment with the Vietnam War". The Oddball character is clearly seen as significant. Whilst the term proto-hippie carefully acknowledges the fact that the figure of the hippie is relatively unresolved in the late 1960s and early 1970s (John Serle's conception of the factions of a typical college campus, including the figure of the hippie does not appear until 1972) it still serves to mark the Oddball character as different from those around him, and as progressive in that role.

Here then Maltby's work serves an example of an academic discussion that is concerned with tracing the relationship between *Kelly's Heroes* and the Vietnam War, and Strong's, which despite ostensibly being concerned with the 'team film' genre still draws out that relationship also. In spite of these examples, with reference purely to the volume of work which either briefly mentions or is directly concerned with, analysis of *Kelly's Heroes*, a comparison with that concerning *M*A*S*H* or *Catch 22* shows the former to be largely overlooked in this regard. There is no single identifiable reason for this absence. The film's budget was comparable to that of *M*A*S*H*, and whilst its

performance at the box office was dwarfed by that of *M*A*S*H*, *Kelly's Heroes* budget as a percentage of its takings is comparable to that of *Catch 22*, even though the latter's \$18 million exceeds the relatively diminutive \$4 million of *Kelly's Heroes*. Critically it was met with approval. To generalise it is not widely discussed in the same way that *M*A*S*H* was but neither does it suffer the derision directed at *Catch 22*. Neither is the film short of star power. Clint Eastwood, though relatively early in his career, had already led a number of hugely popular films at this point and Donald Sutherland's star is rising, largely thanks to the popularity of *M*A*S*H*. Beyond this, out of the three films, *Kelly's Heroes* is the one which is arguably the most blatant in its expression of at least a superficial relationship with the counterculture, primarily through the Oddball character, perhaps recognisable to a modern audience as an anachronistic character and to an audience watching the film at the time of its release as a reference to a contemporary cultural movement.

However, for all its thematic similarities and seemingly purposeful courting of many of the tropes which are elsewhere attributed to *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22*, *Kelly's Heroes* is infrequently discussed in relation to those films. It has been argued that the dominant academic understanding of *Catch 22* and *M*A*S*H* propagates partially because of selective use of primary sources which demonstrate responses which support it. However, the diversity in terms of frameworks and methodologies of the academic discussion of *Kelly's Heroes* outlined here suggests that perhaps a perceived galvanised understanding of the film is lacking within similar sources, fuelling a tendency towards analysis which does not foreground critical response. This potentially means the film has been approached from within contexts which focus on far more diverse aspects of the film than those discussing *Catch 22* and *M*A*S*H*. One of the aims of this research is to discover the extent to which the critical responses and the marketing of *Kelly's Heroes* can be seen as consistent in their understanding and portrayal of the film throughout 1970/71 in comparison with the degree of consistency

evident in the discourses surrounding *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22*. Because the film can be seen to involve many more potentially divergent aspects (the war film, comedy, the heist film, the team picture, the Oddball character) upon which both the critical and academic community could and can potentially focus than the other two films, the process of distilling a single way of understanding of the film may not so readily occur, which in turn may in turn have had an impact on its ability to enter the canon.

The question of *Kelly's Heroes* position in the canon, in comparison with *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22*, may be more complicated than the fact that the film belies simple categorisation. There is also the question of the values associated with those categorisations, chiefly returning to the notion of satire as being seen as particularly culturally significant. Equally, it may be that the role of *Catch 22* as a novel and its own position in the literature canon has had (and continues to have) an effect on the relationship the film has with its own canon. This draws out questions around where the potential boundaries between those two notions of the canon lay and the impact of considering them as separate. In this respect the relative success of the novel also serves as a starting point in the interrogation of the complicated relationship between the canon, financial success and perceptions of popularity which also encompasses the widely varying critical responses, box office takings and post box office distribution.

Why *M*A*S*H*, *Catch 22* and *Kelly's Heroes*?

The assertion that whilst it was still occurring studios were wary of the Vietnam War as a subject matter (Russel, 2002:10) appears on the surface to be relatively accurate. However with a number of low budget films such as *MotorPsycho!* and *The Losers/Nams Angels*, as well as the higher budget *The Green Berets* there are a number of caveats to this statement (Gianos, 1999:160). Equally a slew of films released during the 1970s: *The Dirty Dozen*, *Little Big Man* and *Patton* have all subsequently been linked to the Vietnam conflict (Maltby, 1995:54) (Devine, 1999:72)

(Cagin. et al., 1984:144). More recently, *Three Kings*, a film that has been read as a re-imagining of *Kelly's Heroes* in the Gulf War context (Cettl, 2014:62) (Chapman, 2008:283) has been seen as raising a number of similar issues to the original. There is no single answer to the question of why these films are not explored in more depth here but there a number of reasons for why they are less useful in addressing the specific questions this research aims to answer than the three films it focuses on.

The first of these is the position of these films in the canon and an associated perception, at least academically, of their importance. *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* are mentioned in relation to the counterculture and the Vietnam War in academic work with such frequency that were 'Vietnam War-Comedy' to be conceived of as a genre (and in these circumstances it is possible to do so), with whatever associations that may bring, these two films can be seen effectively as the archetypal representatives of that genre. *Kelly's Heroes* and especially the character of Oddball, could be seen as a conscious effort to engage with those same themes and yet this film has not been widely understood in the same way that *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* have within the academic community. This difference in the academic responses to the films, in spite of their (potentially deliberate) similarities, warrants investigation. There must be, somewhere in *Kelly's Heroes* history, a reason for this and uncovering that reason may also reveal aspects of *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22s*' history which have contributed to their position in the canon.

Whilst *The Dirty Dozen*, *Little Big Man* and *Patton* have been associated with the Vietnam War in some circumstances, this association is far less pervasive than with *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* and certainly cannot be seen to be one of the primary ways in which the films are or were discussed. Equally, because there is less evidence of a relationship between the position within the canon of, for instance *The Dirty Dozen*, and a change in the dominant ways in which it has been discussed, as a means of

examining potential ways in which those changes occur, and their impact, there is far less to draw upon. That is, *The Dirty Dozen* may occupy a position within the canon that marks it as highly regarded but this position does not rely on it as being conceived of in a way that is demonstrably different from the ways in which it was discussed at the time of its release.

It is equally important that genre is a potential key aspect of the changes to the dominant ways in which *Catch 22*, *M*A*S*H* and *Kelly's Heroes* have been discussed. More specifically it is likely to be important to this research that they have been discussed as different genres at differing times. There is potential that this stems from the way in which they display genre traits associated with both war films and comedy films. Investigation of the relationship between these two genres and their relationships with other (sub) genres such as the anti-Vietnam War film or satirical comedy and the impact of those genre assignments the ways in which the films have been discussed, are key aspects of this work. Aside from *Slaughterhouse Five*, this combination of war film and comedy has not been widely noted of any other film from the late 1960s or 1970s. Significantly *Slaughterhouse Five*, as a novel, has been frequently related in academic work to *Catch 22* through an assertion that the two share a satirical stance on war (Ciment, 2008:795) (Gehring. 1996:2). However unlike *Catch 22* there is little evidence of it being read in any other way by the critical community at the time of its release. For instance Vincent Canby, who perhaps significantly does not relate the film to the Vietnam War, does state that he “hates war too” when discussing the “point of the film” (Canby, 1972). Effectively *Slaughterhouse Five* can be seen to consistently have been understood as an anti-war satire by both its early critics and throughout its discussion in the academic community (the same can be said for *Dr Strangelove*) whereas responses to *Catch 22* can be seen as far more diverse.

*M*A*S*H*, *Catch 22* and *Kelly's Heroes* have been read as displaying some key similarities in terms of genre, specifically a duality in their genre which has never been identified in other films contemporary to them. Simultaneously they are potentially diverse in terms of their relationships with the canon, not just in terms of their position within it but in terms of the potential reasons behind those respective positions. Because they share a single year of release those genre similarities and canonical differences can be explored temporally in ways that would not be possible even with potentially very similar films (such as *Three Kings*) that were released at earlier or later dates.

Finally, that *M*A*S*H*, *Catch 22* and *Kelly's Heroes* were all released in 1970 and that this research is primarily concerned with the period soon after their release, means that the case studies presented here encompass what is frequently regarded as one of the more tumultuous and pivotal times for the Hollywood film industry. This 'new' Hollywood, which for many (but by no means all) begins with the release of *Bonnie and Clyde* in 1967 (Kramer, 2005:1), is marked from that which went before both by stylistic and thematic developments in film texts, and seismic shifts in the industry. These resulted, amongst other things, from "the ever mighty Hollywood studios [coming] close to utter bankruptcy", the rise of television and audience diversification (Kokonis, 2008:172). Throughout this period the industry necessarily began to move away from the big budget, large scale, all-inclusive audience (often family orientated) productions that Kramer argues epitomise the "roadshow era" (Kramer, 2005:28). 'New Hollywood' film makers began to make use of artistic freedoms afforded by, or perhaps provoked by, changing censorship laws, developing, and more clearly segmented audiences, (especially the youth audience) and new production and distribution models. A set of young male directors has become inextricably linked to this period via key academic works such as Kolker's *A Cinema of Loneliness*, a study of a number of directors with

an auteur approach that spotlights Altman, the director of *M*A*S*H* as its final subject (Kolker, 1988).

The experimentation and innovation evident in the films that inhabit the 'new Hollywood' milieu is equally evident in the ways in which they are marketed. It has been argued that before the 1970's "Hollywood did not market its films, it promoted them. The publicity departments focussed on publicity and trailers rather than advertising" (Mingant, Tirtaine, Augros, 2015:7). The late 1960s and early 1970s however saw a change in this. Without the 'roadshow' model and the big budget spectacle movies to support it, the studios needed to market films more effectively to particular demographics, developing both the content and placement of print advertising and trailers as well as experimenting with other techniques, such as exploitation marketing (Kattelman, 2011:61). Similarly, Kramer highlights the frequency with which the most popular movies of the period are tied to other highly successful cultural products, primarily soundtracks and books (Kramer, 2005:24), of which *Catch 22* and to a lesser extent *M*A*S*H* serve as examples. The notion of films as elements of wider cultural products was ready source of new and innovative marketing practices, which eventually led to fully integrated and hugely successful products such as *Star Wars*. The reasons for these changes in marketing practices are manifold but primarily they arise for the same reasons as the changes to the films themselves – changing audiences, changing product, changing distribution models. Beyond this, the simple fact that studios could not fall back on tried and tested strategies to promote their products and that perhaps even the notion of marketing itself being relatively new to the industry, may have resulted in the type of experimentation that is evident in, for instance, the marketing for *Kelly's Heroes*. Here a number of very different, and unrelated poster styles come together in what feels like a relatively incoherent and confused press pack. The marketing and critical responses to the three films that are studied in this work serve to highlight, in *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22*, the studios' approach

with two key 'new Hollywood' texts and with *Kelly's Heroes*, the impact of these changes with a text outside of that canon.

Static Views & Counterculture Connections (Changing/Static Meanings and Audiences/Locating Meanings)

In work first published in 1976, 6 years after the release of the film, Rhode argues of both the book and the film, that *Catch 22* embodies the concept of “an insane system of ideas that appears irrefutable to those trapped inside it” (Rhode, 1976:624).

*M*A*S*H* is also discussed - the perception of it as the contemporary audience's preference between the two films affording it lengthier analysis than that of *Catch 22*. It is argued that *M*A*S*H* is “[s]et at the time of the Korean War, yet [is] clearly alluding to the conflict in Vietnam”. Unlike the more recent work which discusses the film, this assertion is supported with analysis. This points to behavioural contradictions of the main characters; the juxtaposition of skilled compassionate medics with hostility towards the bureaucracy within which they are forced to operate as evidence. *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* are related here through the similarity between this concrete example of the concept of people fighting within a bureaucratic system and the more abstract set of ideas which constitutes the ‘*Catch 22*’ – that “insane set of ideas” (Rhode, 1976:624) within which the Yossarian character is seen to be trapped and so is fighting against.

Whilst Rhode's discussion of *M*A*S*H* is primarily analytical the film is still viewed as having a strong association with the Vietnam War. As such there are notable similarities between the conclusions drawn here, just six years after the release of the film, and those drawn over twenty years later. This relationship is based on a connection with the counterculture. This is not only in that the counterculture is synonymous with the anti-Vietnam war movement, but also in that the protagonists are seen to gain plausibility by their similarity to the “hippie campus hero”, which he argues would have been familiar to contemporary audiences through television exposure.

Rhode invokes John Searle's *The Campus War* for a conception of this 'hero'. Searle divides the theoretical student body into five subcultures of which Rhode's "hippie campus hero" appears to be a conflation of two, the radical and the hippie. "[T]here is a bohemian element which, for want of a better word, I shall call the hippie culture" (Searle, 1972:51). The phrasing here suggests a reticence to fully embrace the term "hippie culture". This is perhaps because this conceptual hippie is still a relatively recent development at this point. Searle identifies key aspects of this culture as:

experimentalism and conscientious nonconformity in matters of drugs, sex, art forms – especially electronic music – clothing, personal relationships and states of consciousness of all kinds. Marijuana has come to play a central role in the 'life style' of this culture... (Searle, 1972:51)

All of these elements are seen to some extent to have become co-opted by some of the other subcultures. Beyond this, Searle argues that because of a tendency towards a more insouciant lifestyle, hippie culture itself is not especially compatible with the sort of radical activism inherent in opposition to, for instance, American involvement in the Vietnam War (the US incursion into Cambodia in 1970 is identified as one example of motivation for student protest). However Searle argues that hippies are effectively mobilised by the more radical individuals around them (despite being "hopeless at organising politically significant manifestations on their own" (Searle, 1972:51)) and as part of that larger group became key figures. Here Searle presents one of the earliest written conceptions of the hippie. It embodies a number of concepts which have proven to be especially enduring. The actively nonconformist, almost caricatured vision of the hippie is seen as the cornerstone of the counterculture movement. Searle's depiction of the hippie is important here, not just in the way in which it informs Rhode's analysis of *M*A*S*H* but also in that it provides a convenient definition by which to understand the counterculture throughout this work. That is not to say that the counterculture can or

should be distilled into the figure of the hippie alone. Subtly, this conception of the counterculture is different to the definition given by O'Sullivan et al.: "[a] collective label, applied to the politicized, largely middle class, alternative or 'revolutionary' youth sub-cultures of the 1960's and early 1970's". As Rhode demonstrates, when academics discuss the counterculture in relation to these films it is potentially that the specifics of, for instance, the anti-war or civil rights movement which are integral to that culture are in some respect overshadowed by notions of appearance, sexual preference or drug taking - arguably more aesthetic or superficial concerns.

Savour. Vietnam is a kind of oriental spice, a secret additive to many successful concoctions. You can't taste it consciously in *Johnny Got his Gun*, *Catch 22*, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, *A Separate Peace* or *M*A*S*H*, but it's there, especially in the last film with its long haired, pot-smoking rebels who are out of time and place in the Korean setting but instantly recognisable to an audience bred on Vietnam. (Smith, 1973:37)

For Smith the simplest way to conceive of the relationship between *M*A*S*H* and the Vietnam War is through the use of the cultural reference point of the hippie, the "long haired, pot-smoking rebels" with which it is apparently assumed the audience will be familiar. Smith's primary aim is to discover why the film industry was so reticent to produce films that were explicitly about the Vietnam War whilst the conflict continued. One area he explores, which is potentially where this perceived familiarity with certain Vietnam era tropes comes from, is the ubiquity of news coverage of the war on television. Beyond this, and more prescient given the hippie type characters Smith describes, is the equal prevalence of television coverage of protests against the war. Vietnam, understood as a sort of imperceptible additive which is integral to the success of these films does not require the film makers to have conscientiously engaged with the war, or to have anything significant to say about it. The audience infuses the films

with these notions of, for want of a better phrase, the secret additive of 'Vietnam-ness' by relating aspects of them to their own visual or even moral map of the conflict. Vietnam, the "kind of oriental spice" becomes not just the conflict, but the sum of the visual record of that war, the literary record, the experiences of the audience and conceptions about that country and the war in general.

This way of understanding the relationship between *Catch 22*, *M*A*S*H* and the other films Smith mentions is potentially very different to that described by Lucia et al. as 'Socially Engaged'. For Smith the effect of the war in Vietnam is especially pervasive but the relationship is ultimately far less direct than simply comprising a social commentary. One aspect of the research undertaken here is to investigate the extent to which Vietnam and the Vietnam War was discussed in this way with regard to *M*A*S*H*, *Catch 22* and *Kelly's Heroes* throughout 1970/71. More specifically it asks, where a relationship with the Vietnam War is identified, if that relationship is more readily discussed in the manner of Smith, a more indistinct but omnipresent sense, or in a way which foregrounds the films as social commentary, and do reviewers themselves conceive of a difference between those two concepts? Could the inclusion of the Oddball character in *Kelly's Heroes*, who seems to conform to a number of these defining hippie traits lead to that film's relationship with the counterculture being conceived of in different terms to *Catch 22*? In *Catch 22* there is perhaps no character like Oddball that is relatively easily viewed as carrying a set of counterculture associations. Similarly because the film is based upon a book that has enjoyed significant literary success and is often discussed in terms which foreground its satire, it can be seen to embody a number of counter-cultural concepts which arguably are not present in *Kelly's Heroes*. Can these differences be seen to affect discussion of and ways of understanding the films? Within this is the question of whether contemporary critics are even approaching *Kelly's Heroes* in similar ways to the other two films, or even in similar contexts and publications?

During the 1980's the increase in academic discussions which refer to *M*A*S*H*, and to a lesser extent *Catch 22*, is demonstrative of their progressively dominant position as significant key texts. These discussions vary little in their conception of the films from those in more recent work. However the films are not discussed as if they constitute direct anti-war statements in and of themselves with the same confidence that is found in later works. It is interesting to compare Cook's assertion that "[w]hile *M*A*S*H* had a tough surdist edge and set new standards for the melding of cruelty, violence, and humour, it never pretended to be more than a hip service comedy" (Cook, 1981:640) made in 1981 with his later assertion about the same film: "The anti-Vietnam subtext was even clearer in *M*A*S*H*" (Cook, 2000:163). For Cook, the question of the extent to which *M*A*S*H* could be understood as an anti-war film is clearly a prescient one. His first analysis of the film focuses on stylistic and technological concerns and in this context a reading of the film as a commentary on the war cannot be located. The later analysis, for all of its directness is based around the presentation of the theatrical posters for *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22*. The "subtext" which could not perhaps be distilled in the films themselves becomes concrete in their posters, detached from the films and understood as a marketing technique. The difference does not represent a dramatic change of opinion for Cook, but a continuation on the same theme: these films, somehow, have something to do with Vietnam; the connection cannot be explicitly located in the films themselves but can perhaps be in materials related to them. Likewise, the argument that "[w]ith the deepening unpopularity of the Vietnam war, the stage was set for three political epics which would offer an equally potent demystification of war" is based around an understanding of *M*A*S*H*, *Patton* and *Little Big Man* as allegorically addressing the "crisis of faith over Vietnam" (Cagin. et al. , 1984:144). Here, because the audience is understood as carrying a pre-conceived notion of the Vietnam War as negative, that "crisis of faith", the films become a way for those audiences to comprehend that issue, and potentially clarify their feelings towards

it. This is a different notion to the films directly informing the opinion that the conflict is negative. The films are seen as part of a larger discussion surrounding the war, as opposed to being directly responsible for, or wholly comprising that discussion.

Jeanine Basinger cites *M*A*S*H* in relation to a diverse range of subjects such as the role of the football game in the combat film and exploration of the doctor character as the hero. However it is in the notes which accompany her analysis, which is also concerned with the role of women in combat films, that it is stated that *M*A*S*H* is "set in Korea, but reflecting attitudes inspired by Vietnam" (Basinger, 2003:305). Like Cagin, et al., Basinger's phrasing suggests a reticence to make the same sort of definite connections with the anti-war movement or the counterculture that are evident in the more recent examples. Whilst that movement could certainly be seen to fall within the category of 'attitudes inspired by Vietnam' it does not comprise an argument that the film represents an unequivocal anti-war statement. In addition the work is ostensibly concerned with films based in World war II, so references to *M*A*S*H* are cursory; it is included in the notes in spite of its Korean setting. *M*A*S*H* is discussed in some detail though, especially with regard to the role of women in the film. The inclusion of the analysis in the notes, afforded despite its status as a film which is not set during the same war as most of the other texts discussed, demonstrates that (at least with regard to the role of women) the film, it is perceived to be noteworthy.

Like Basinger, Yvonne Tasker is concerned with the often problematic ways in which women are represented in *M*A*S*H*, and again, this focus leads to far more in depth discussion of the film than in other more recent academic work. Genre is clearly important here, Tasker titles the discussion of the film "*M*A*S*H*: an anti-military service comedy" (2011:175). However a key aspect of Tasker's work on *M*A*S*H* is discussion of relationships between women and men occurring very specifically within a military environment, and the ramifications of women being the subjects of comedic

aspects of the film. For instance: “[a]s a woman with authority in a military system that the film, and its male protagonists, reject, O’Houlihan is a comic foil for both its strong misogynous and anti-authority impulses.” (Tasker, 2011:176). As such, the discussion Tasker presents cannot be seen as viewing genre as a starting point by which to base an exploration which seeks to either confirm or deny that genre. Here the film’s genre, specifically the military and comedic aspects of the film, underpins the discussion of its representation women. Effectively, because the genre designation can be seen to arise out of this discussion, rather than vice versa it is a far more valuable exploration of the role of genre in the film than an analysis which seeks to explore how, or why, it does or does not conform to a given genre category, or work that makes a genre designation then seeks to explore the film purely within that.

The three examples discussed above demonstrate that *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* are afforded a privileged position and seen to be important films, however these analyses does not rely overly on the assumption or assertion that the films are anti-war statements or their inclusion in an anti-war film category. This may be because they are understood as aspects of a larger debate or set of attitudes surrounding that conflict rather than being posited as exemplary of that debate as a whole.

Less equivocal is Bernard F. Dick, who argues that *M*A*S*H* was a favourite of “the anti-war young, who regarded it (along with Patton) as an anti-war film. That the film was read as anti-war is understood as a key aspect of the young audience’s enjoyment of it, especially given that that audience is in itself defined by its position on war. The audience is understood as especially active in the process of attributing meaning to the film. Their pre-conceived notion of the war in Vietnam, their anti-war position, is seen to be mapped onto the film in a more direct, but similar argument to that which Cagin et al make. This assertion that an anti-war reading is applied by an audience is perhaps slightly eclipsed by the more unequivocal statement that “*M*A*S*H* is an anti-war film

revealing the folly of war" (Dick, 1985:248). Here anti-war sentiment is seen to be an inherent aspect of the film itself rather than something discerned in it by its audience. This slightly alters the thrust of the argument, meaning that whilst this could be suggesting that the film was being read in a particular fashion by a given audience it could also be that the audience were making a reading of the film which is seen to align with the film maker's intention to convey anti-war sentiment.

Doherty argues that Columbia's decision to sell the *Catch 22* "property for "costs to date" to Filmways" (Doherty, 1993:283) in 1966 was a manifestation of the studio's sense that films related to the war in Vietnam were unlikely to translate into box office success. The evidence (a quote from studio executive Leo Jaffe "we simply had a change of mind about the subject matter..." (Doherty 1993:283)) is ambiguous as to the precise reasons behind the sale. As such an assumption that the (at this stage unmade) film comprises at least to some extent a commentary on the war becomes an integral aspect of the argument. This is subsequently extended far less equivocally to *M*A*S*H* which is seen as a "...critique of Vietnam ... albeit as metaphor". Because the research is ostensibly concerned with representations of World War II, *M*A*S*H* is mentioned almost in passing.

These analyses concerned with *Catch 22* and *M*A*S*H* throughout the 1980s and early 90s present readings of the films which fall within a spectrum which ranges from an understanding of the film as a direct anti-war statement, to once-removed anti-war readings which are seen to be grounded in the audience. The limits of this spectrum are relatively constricted though. There is evidence of a proclivity towards relating the films to the Vietnam War and framing analysis of them within this relationship, regardless of where or how that connection is seen to occur. The frequency with which the films are referred to, especially in contexts where they do not ostensibly fall within the scope of the studies, indicates that they were being considered as distinguished

and important texts. That the analyses all discuss the films in similar terms indicates that this conception of the films importance is tied to the dominant way of understanding them. That is, there is a correlation between the increasing frequency with which these films are discussed and the perception that they are concerned with the important issue of the Vietnam War.

Later academic discussions of *M*A*S*H*, especially those which demonstrate a more analytical approach to the film, as opposed to the more definitive text book type studies, continue to demonstrate a discernible reticence towards drawing a direct connection between the film and the Vietnam War. However, a significant proportion of those discussions are framed by an understanding of *M*A*S*H* as an anti-war film or argue that the film is connected to the counterculture. William Paul devotes large sections of *Laughing Screaming* to discussing various aspects of the film, from the role of class in its humour to its treatment of women (Paul, 1994). Similarly, *The Political Companion to American Film* ties *M*A*S*H*'s "clear cut elitist strain" (Crowdus, 1994:242) to the screenplay writer's (Ring Lardner Jr.) experiences under the Hollywood black list. Other analysis fall within the rubric of auteur theory (Plecki, 1985. O'Brien, 1995. Kolker, 2000. Thompson, 2006). Here Altman is placed at the centre of the analysis with style and content primary concerns. Whilst these studies are ostensibly taking very different aspects of *M*A*S*H* as their focus, and are completed within very different frameworks their similarity lies in that their line of questioning is at least partially informed by the broader question of the extent to which *M*A*S*H* can be understood as an anti-war film.

Discussion of this relationship is often nebulous or simplistic. O'Brien states that the film is "anti-military (though it never explicitly condemns either the Korean war or the then ongoing Vietnam Conflict)" (O'Brien, 1995:36) but does not explain what it is that gives the film its "anti-military" stance. Equally, William Paul's assertion (in a discussion

which also encompasses *American Graffiti*) that “the Vietnam war hung over both these movies and endowed them with darker undercurrents for contemporary audiences and critics” (Paul, 1994:92-93) is representative of the vagueness which is prevalent in the construction of this connection. The specifics, and the mechanics of the way in which the Vietnam War impacts *M*A*S*H*, or its viewers, is not explored but assumed. Here there is an assumption underpinning the original proposed audience response, and a further assumption that this reading is specific to audiences consuming the film soon after its release. This highlights an issue with attributing readings to audiences without presenting evidence of those readings having ever occurred, demonstrating the need in this work to be wary of extending critical responses to the audience at large. It also it also highlights a further issue with invoking ‘contemporary’ audiences because the reading is understood as occurring in a relatively specific time and place. This heightened specificity in fact becomes far easier to question in the face of evidence that presents a contrary point of view. There certainly is evidence of the critical community reading the film as associated with the Vietnam War but the presence of critical work published within a week of its release that does not make this reading at all seriously undermines Paul’s assertion. This highlights the need for analysis in this work to be acutely aware of the temporal location of the texts it focuses on, and to make this equally clear to the reader.

Robert Kolker begins his discussion: “*M*A*S*H* is not a good place to find the beginnings of Altman’s investigations of genre. It is finally no more of an anti-war film than is *Paths of Glory*” (Kolker, 2011:350). This is significant partially because here the anti-war film is understood as, if not a genre category itself, at least related to genre (in spite of the assertion that *M*A*S*H* does not fulfil the apparent requirements for inclusion in it: “*M*A*S*H* is anti-authority only”) and also because even in disagreement there is an implicit assumption that this is how the film is widely understood. Disagreement here can only arise out of a perceived consensus.

Kolker's work demonstrates that whilst discussion of *M*A*S*H* in terms of the extent to which it can be viewed as an anti-war text is prevalent, consensus as to the conclusions drawn is certainly not universal. However work that argues that *M*A*S*H* is ultimately not an anti-war film must still take the question of extent as its starting point. Even those works where more time and effort has been devoted to other questions and concerns often include an unsupported affirmations of the relationship between *M*A*S*H* and the Vietnam War. As such these analyses can still be seen to ultimately compliment, propagate or at least leave conceptions of the film as an anti-Vietnam war text intact. In effect, there are works which argue that the film is not an anti-war text, but there are none which do not acknowledge this reading at all. As such, this can be understood as the dominant paradigm by which *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* are discussed and understood regardless of the plethora of differing approaches and conclusions within that paradigm. Whilst the perceived location or mode of operation of meaning arguably changes, the tendency towards conception of the films as related to the Vietnam War, or more specifically, as anti-war texts is ubiquitous and enduring within academia.

It is possible to identify within that academic discourse a cyclical trend surrounding *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22*. The films are discussed because they are perceived to be important texts concerned with an equally important part of American history, the repetition of that discussion in itself re-affirming that importance. Likewise, because the perceived importance is so closely linked to the importance of the Vietnam War, inevitably this is the rubric within which the films are discussed, thus this link is also re-affirmed. With each iteration the extent to which the actual foundation or operation of this link is discussed reduces as its perceived strength grows. It is perhaps because this process of building assertions about the film upon previous assertions has a relatively long history, being continuously and relatively regularly re-asserted, that the concept of *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* as relating to the Vietnam war has become

embedded enough to allow it to be cited without qualification in recent film histories (for instance: Lucia, et al. 2012:14).

It is conceivable that this consensus within the academic community with regard to these films arises because the apparatus required to conceive of the films in this way is overwhelmingly conspicuous in the films themselves. That is, their meaning is an inherent part of the isolated film text. Here, the ubiquity of readings of the films as anti-war texts, or as having some relationship with the Vietnam War, would be a consequence of scholars simply extracting and explaining that meaning, or perhaps correctly interpreting the intentions of the film makers to convey an anti-war, or Vietnam War related message. However it has been shown that the earlier academic work on *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* consistently decentralises those readings from the film text and locates them within audiences or marketing. This is not to argue that those academics do not, or cannot, be implying that those audiences (or those marketing the films) were simply making and reacting to 'correct' readings of the films which align with the academics own. There is evidence in the discussion above that academics were not viewing the audience responses in this way. Therefore the prevalence of academic understanding of the films as anti-war texts is perhaps not a consequence so much of the films themselves somehow holding that meaning within them but of, for instance, overwhelming evidence that audiences were viewing them in that way. Indeed, it seems likely given that it is present in very early academic work (published within a few years of release) concerning the films, that this reading of them is a consequence of a predisposition towards discussing them in these terms. In effect, that this notion this arises before academics were concerned with them, and academia drew upon and perpetuated this discussion. This would explain the sense that academics were thinking about *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* in terms of the viability of viewing them as anti-war films, but were not seeking to identify a precise location of that sentiment. They were contributing to an ongoing discussion which was already framed by a conception

of the films in these terms; this discussion though was not taking place in the academic domain, but the critical one.

By the end of 1970 discussion of *M*A*S*H* in newspapers was strewn with references to *M*A*S*H* as an anti-war film. It is referred to as a “U.S. anti-war film” (U.P.I, 1970) in an article discussing its win at the Cannes Film Festival. Fred Wright’s review of the film, published in the Evening Independent in April 1970 is headlined “anti-war *M*A*S*H* is bloody good” (Wright, 1970). Likewise, an article about *Catch 22* headlined “Catch 22 is a Must for Dodger’s Folks” argues that “this anti-war movie has no heroes and no winners” (The Spokane Daily Chronicle, 1970:8). These reviews and articles present a strong sense of a pervasive understanding of the films as anti-war statements, out of which the propensity in early academic work on the films towards understanding them as anti-war commentaries can be seen to arise. The U.P.I article about *M*A*S*H*’s performance at the Cannes Film Festival is not a review, but an explanation of the controversy which surrounded the films win. The film is described by the writer as a “US anti-war film” (U.P.I, 1970). One of the judges of the festival, Mrs Gouze-Renal is quoted “it would have been far more meaningful ... to have given our top prize to a film like *The Strawberry Statement* dealing directly with the American Student protest movement rather than to an anti-war film”. In quoting Gouze-Renal a reading of the film as anti-war comes directly from an especially knowledgeable audience member. Specifically this is an audience member whose position as a judge of the festival adds weight to her opinion and marks her as hierarchically above the average audience member. Similarly the Spokane Daily Chronicle conceives of the film as having a persuasive anti-war message (The Spokane Daily Chronicle, 1970:8). Though the article is relatively light hearted in tone it evokes an active audience, that is, an audience that is “participatory in receiving and moulding [a] message” (Narula, 2006:23), here, using the film to work through an imagined family conflict. It is perhaps because some of the reviews and articles from late in 1970 tie readings of the films as

anti-war statements to the audience rather than viewing them as actively present within the films themselves that academics analysing the films so frequently do the same.

The Academic, the Critic and the Audience - A Unified View of Discourse

Critical responses to *M*A*S*H*, *Catch 22* and *Kelly's Heroes* which appear in newspapers throughout 1970 (thus demarcating them from later academic criticism) allude to the audience relatively infrequently. The wider audience is more implied, or imagined, with the critic themselves at once assuming the position of audience member, and, in providing that wider audience with information about the films, assuming a position of responsibility within that group. This responsibility primarily lies with the need to make recommendations upon which the reader may base decisions which carry both a financial and time implications - the act of paying for, and spending time viewing a film.

With their shared assertion that "the Vietnam War hung over both these movies" the "contemporary audiences and critics" (1994) are understood by William Paul as separate components of, the same group. Whether conflated, or demarcated, the critical audience and the wider audience are seen in much of the academic work where they are discussed, as the key active link between the films and the Vietnam War. It is the audience who were viewing the film in this way, rather than it being an inherent part of the film itself.

Munday concludes that *M*A*S*H* is best "interpreted as anti-military" (Munday, 2012:197-198) rather than anti-war; the discussion which leads to this conclusion is one that is initially concerned with textual analysis of the film, this then gives way to exploration of the opinions of a number of critics. Vincent Canby is quoted as "consider[ing] it the second best war comedy after *Dr. Strangelove*" (Munday, 2012:197). Also quoted, a Time review: "nothing is sacred because everyone is scared" (Munday, 2012:198). These quotes can be seen as a way of introducing opinions

contemporary to the film to the discussion. Munday relies on reviews as the only secondary source her analysis draws upon and they are used to inform the conclusions of her work, the critic serving as one contemporary voice within a wider analysis.

Lawrence Suid begins his analysis of *M*A*S*H* with the assertion that “[m]ost people viewed *M*A*S*H* as a war film, or at least a spoof of war films; some have seen it as a war comedy, others as an anti-war statement. One critic called it “an animated cartoon with the cartoon figures played by real people”” (Suid, 2002:278). For Suid the review is one voice amongst many. However because it is the only one which is supported by evidence it can be seen as especially privileged within that larger audience, or “most people”. The critic effectively becomes a representative for that whole wider audience, rather than a lone voice.

In these relatively recent works the figure of the critic and its place within the wider audience is discussed in very similar terms to work published during the 1970s, soon after the release of the films. In that earlier context the presentation of evidence of audience responses, or critical responses as part of that audience response, is not as prevalent as it becomes later. This is perhaps because the films had been released relatively recently and as such responses to them were still relatively fresh.

Essentially the need to argue that the film was read in a particular way with evidence from a review (or some sort of audience research) is potentially not as important because that argument is taking place within a discourse which was already dominated by that view. Use of these critical responses becomes more prevalent, and increases in importance in more recent academic work as it becomes less likely that readers would have witnessed reactions to *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* first hand. Because of their temporal relationship with the films, academics writing about *Catch 22* and *M*A*S*H* relatively soon after their release might have conceived of their work as an integral part of the ongoing discussion about them in a way that is different to later academic work which holds the texts at a distance. This distance is both a consequence of the passing

of time and, potentially, the academics own understanding of the discourse they engage in as observational rather than participatory. The tendency of later academics to use critical discourse as evidence suggests that fundamentally they position themselves as outside of discussion surrounding the film.

One of the ramifications of viewing the discourse surrounding the films in this way, as finite or demarcated by the type of people engaged in them, is that when those earlier critical or audience responses are invoked they are conceived of as somehow complete, over, in the past, and more presciently fixed. This is not to argue that those earlier academic works which presented less audience response evidence for their arguments are somehow better than the more recent ones, but to argue for an attempt to push aside that notion of viewing discourse from afar and acknowledging one's own position within it. Moreover, to acknowledge that the academic discourse, the critical discourse and any other set of utterances about the films are of the same discourse and that a discussion of it is an inherent aspect of its furtherance.

The Importance of Genre

This introduction has referred to audiences, the critical community, the academic community, and implicitly within references to marketing materials, and explicitly in relation to film directors or producers, the film industry. To begin to ask questions which are concerned with notions of what genres those discussing *Catch 22*, *M*A*S*H* and *Kelly's Heroes* conceive them to be we must briefly explore the different ways in which those groups use genre. Rick Altman provides an overview of the common assumptions that those discussing genre (but also, frequently those who are discussing their own use of genre) make with regard to its operation and uses:

- a. genre films are mass-produced according to a standard generic template;
- b. producers systematically identify each film with a single genre;

- c. distributors and exhibitors respect and perpetuate the producer's generic identification of a film;
- d. consumers choose films based on that identification
- e. spectators follow a single set of generic codes unproblematically through each genre film;
- f. critics, like other spectators, correctly recognise each film's generic identity.

(Altman, 1999:144)

This lifecycle of linked uses builds upon an earlier chapter in *Film/Genre* which asks "[w]hat is generally understood by the notion of film genre" (Altman, 1999:13). This chapter is used to begin to question assumptions about the ways in which genre is used. In refuting the notions that "genres have clear, stable identities and borders", that they are "transhistorical", that they "undergo predictable development" and that "[i]ndividual films belong wholly and permanently to a single genre" (Altman, 1999:V), Altman calls into question many of the assumptions about genre that underpin the lifecycle outlined above, and critically, the critical, and academic discussions of *Catch 22*, *M*A*S*H* and *Kelly's Heroes*. As such, the work presented here serves to support those refutations, most obviously in terms of the final notion, as discussed earlier, that the genre of a given film is fixed and immutable.

Altman discusses issues around the ways in which the academic community makes use of genre, as well as with the relationship between genre, the film industry and the audience. Altman notes that "[g]enres are [primarily viewed as being] defined by the film industry, and recognized by the mass audience", tracing a "direct path from industrial origins". However, he argues that whilst there clearly is a relationship between the film industry and audiences that revolves around genre, this has only "been described in the most primitive manner" (Altman, 1999:15). Effectively, Altman

argues that the situation is far more complicated than the industry simply selecting a genre, and the audience recognising it.

So whilst it is likely that producers do identify their films with certain genres, it is unlikely that they identify them with single genres, and this certainly does not guide every decision throughout the production process. Distributors and exhibitors may use genres, but they are also highly unlikely to use single genres, and their practices will still be influenced by a plethora of other things, from cast of the film to the planned release date. Equally, the critical community does sometimes use genres as a measure by which to assess the quality of a film, but rarely will a review comprise nothing else, and it certainly is not a requirement that a review does this. Finally, far from filtering down to audiences, influencing their film selection and viewing experience, genres often only appear to become important to some people when they are asked to use them to locate their preferences – as frequently to indicate what they do not want to watch, as what they do (Altman, 1999:110). However, for Altman, one of the biggest issues with this model of uses of genre is that it is such a linear, sequential, closed system. “[L]ike two serpents biting each other’s tails, industry and audience are seen as locked in a symbiotic relationship leaving no room for a third party.” (Altman, 1999:16).

Audiences do not respond to film texts in a homogenised way – interpretations are fundamentally dependent on context. This is not to argue that each individual will respond differently to a film text (although, one could argue, that something like your current mood might alter your perception of a film), but that there are likely to be fairly major differences in responses across things like geographical or demographic divides. Context then clearly becomes a ‘third party’, taking its place alongside changing industry practices, evolving audience preferences and even apparently unrelated

events such as wars, in the pantheon of things that have an impact on industry, critical, academic and audience uses of genre.

Genre is important here for two reasons. The first is that it is *perceived* to be the site of meaning, which passes from the film industry to audiences. Because we are concerned here with how the films are perceived, especially in how certain meanings come to be dominant, it is key that we understand how those who participate in creating and perpetuating those dominant meanings understand both their own, and others, uses of genre. The second is that because it is *actually* the site of a significant amount of negotiation around the meanings of film texts, one that is extensively used, but inherently fluid and difficult to pin down. This means that it must become central to a study which seeks to assess how meanings change over time, and what processes alter those meanings.

A Different Story: Early Reviews of *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22*

The academic discussion of *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* is frequently supported with evidence from the critical community and is dominated by a sense of the contemporary reviews contribution to the construction of, or at least support of the conception of *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* as anti-war films. This in turn is explicitly related to genre. 'Anti-war' is frequently viewed not only as a sentiment which is present in the films but as a genre category to which they are seen to (or sometimes not seen to) belong. What is less explicit though, but equally important, is the view that this is how the films were understood from the time of their release. This relates back to the assured way in which the more recent text book discussions of the films argue an anti-war position.

Perhaps less obviously, those discussions such as Mundy's, whose assertion that Richard Corliss "did not consider the film anti-war or radical" carry with them implication that this is somehow of note in its difference. Ultimately her conclusion that the film is

best “interpreted as anti-military” (Munday, 2012:197-198) is still informed by the assumption that the film is best understood as ‘anti’ anything at all. What is problematic here, specifically in relation to *M*A*S*H*, is that whilst the newspaper reviews from the latter part of 1970 consistently discuss it as an ‘anti-war’ film, use of this phrase specifically, and other language which suggests an understanding of the film in anti-war terms does not, aside from one specific instance, appear in reviews published before, or immediately after the release of the film in January of 1970. In actuality there are reviews which actively argue against the notion of the film as anything but comedy. For instance William Johnson asserts that “*M*A*S*H* is not really about army life or rebellion, or any of its other ostensible topics: it’s about the human condition. And that’s why it is such an exciting comedy” (Johnson, 1970:38). The one critic who does understand *M*A*S*H* as an anti-war film is the author of the Time review to which Munday refers (the two other reviews cited were published later in the year (Time, 1970:66). So whilst *M*A*S*H* is consistently discussed academically within the rubric of its anti-war sentiment it becomes evident that *M*A*S*H* was not always discussed in these terms, and that by presenting these reviews in isolation, or as coming out of a sort of homogeneous ‘set of reviews of *M*A*S*H*’ they are also taken out of the context in which they were published.

Similarly, whilst the discussion of the academic work concerned with *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* undertaken here has highlighted the tendency to view the two films as thematically and generically very similar there are a number of contemporary reviews which mention *M*A*S*H* only to argue the differences between the two films. Beyond this there is evidence that reviews of *Catch 22* are tied up with notions of the original novel, which was viewed as a powerful satire, and the extent to which the film can be seen as representative, or true to the ideals which are attached to that. To understand any given review as either wholly representative of that debate or to position it as

somehow apart from that discourse is to misrepresent the degree to which it can be understood as evidence of the thrust of the discourse as a whole. By highlighting these examples of reviews which do not seem to conform to the accepted academic understanding of these films it becomes clear that the ways in which they are understood and discussed is hugely dependent on context.

As such these examples from reviews of *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* serve two purposes. The first is that they serve to highlight the key issue with the current dominant understanding of the two films. By presenting evidence that the films were largely not initially discussed in terms of their relationship with the Vietnam War, that tendency in academia to understand them as such is at least to some extent bought into question. More presciently though these reviews can also be compared with those which have been drawn upon to inform academic discussion. In making such a comparison it becomes clear that there are important differences between the ways in which critics were discussing the films in the reviews which have been used as evidence in academia, and those which have not. As such, viewing reviews as somehow representative of wider opinions about the films is shown to be extremely problematic. Equally problematic is the isolation in which reviews are placed in these academic discussions. The review is frequently conceptualised solely within the rubric of the critic's relationship to the film. That is, the only thing which shapes the review is the critic's response to the film - a stance which fails to take into account the critic's position within the wider cultural landscape. In effect the issue is both one of viewing critical responses to the films as representative of the responses of the audience at large whilst often concurrently failing to acknowledge that those critical responses are part of a wider discourse surrounding the films.

It is useful here refer to Mittell's work on genre and television wherein it is argued that "[genres] are cultural products, constituted by media practices and subject to ongoing change and redefinition" (2004:1). A key aspect of this is the assertion that no single text can be seen to constitute, or somehow hold within itself any given genre, through shared characteristics, plot devices, or any other basic part of their individual texts. Mittell names the view of genre as an intrinsic property of a text 'the textualist assumption' (2001:5) and explores some of the consequences it has had for genre analysis. Primarily that it remains central regardless of whether methodologies seek to question or explore definitions, interpretations or the evolution of genre. Mittell argues that a need to step past this assumption arises out of the way in which genre can be seen to come about only when individual texts are understood in terms of their relationships with others. Moreover, genre is a function of the industries which make those texts, and the audiences that consume them: "[t]exts cannot interact on their own; they come together only through cultural practices such as production and reception" (Mittell, 2001:6). The ramifications of this in terms of how one might then go about studying genre, and perceived changes in genre, in the absence of a central filmic text is explored in the methodological statement of this work.

Whilst the 'anti-war film' is rarely discussed as an explicit genre category in either critical or academic work (concerned with these films) the extent to which they can or cannot be seen to fit into that category is frequently used as a framing device. That the films can be viewed as genre hybrids, a mixture of the war film and the comedy film, serves to complicate matters. With regards to *M*A*S*H* especially, it is its genre status, the process of identifying it and discussing it as a particular genre, which most clearly changes from review to review over a period of time. There is an initial a tendency towards reviewers of *M*A*S*H* seeing it as a comedy film. Here it is useful to return to the notion that there is a sense that there are specific things which films of different

genres should be doing - these reviews foreground the ability of the film to make the audience laugh - as opposed to later reviews, which show an increased tendency toward not addressing the question of how funny the film is, focusing instead on how successfully it conveys an anti-war message. The film is understood as both a comedy film and as an anti-war film. Because there is no inherent change in the film text itself this becomes a key argument against the 'textualist assumption' - that sense that genre is inherent within the text in the way in which, for instance, Suid's discussion suggests. It also speaks to the myriad of other influences under which critics operate. Critics in the latter part of 1970 were demonstrating a clear propensity towards discussing the film as part of the anti-war genre, whilst earlier reviews are more likely to discuss it as a comedy. So whilst genre is a key aspect of the ways in which films are understood there is perhaps evidence of a tendency towards thinking of genres, and the genre of given texts as fixed and unchanging, when it is actually subject to constant fluctuations. Whilst noting that there are differences is enough to argue that the way in which the film is understood changes, highlighting the fact that genres and meanings are fluid, it says nothing of how this change occurred.

Because the output of the critical community is relatively cohesive at any given point with regard to *M*A*S*H* (many critics were writing similar things about the film at the same time) it is potentially possible to argue that they were either influencing each other or that they were, together, influenced by something outside of that critical community. This research aims to discover if this is the case, to discover to what extent either, or both, of the statements above is true and if so, to understand better the process by which these discursive trends operate. In doing so it circumvents one issue that has potentially lead to a reductive academic discussion, the selective way in which reviews have been used as evidence. That is not to argue against the use of reviews as evidence though. It has been shown that they are a particularly useful way of

accessing contemporary opinions about the film, and are potentially even more powerful when the position of the critic is held to be influential within the audience at large. But it is to argue that critical discourse is made up of many utterances and in the same way that a single text cannot be seen to exist in isolation, neither can the critical discourse be seen to operate apart from the wider discourse surrounding the film. As such, whilst single reviews are useful in that they provide a single point of view (and no more than this) when taken in context with each other and historically, they provide evidence of far more unified attitudes towards the film.

Aims

In this introduction it has argued that *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* are frequently understood as relating to the counterculture movement, to be anti-war films and more specifically to be anti-Vietnam war films. It has also been argued that in academic work, especially in recent academic work (2000 – present) there is a widespread assumption that this understanding of the films is stable in this regard, that is, there is a prolonged uniformity in opinion regarding their meaning. Partially this arises from a relatively long history of discussing the films in this way, but is also a consequence of the ways and contexts within which they were and are discussed. However, whilst analysis of *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* has tended towards a foregrounding of their relationship with the Vietnam war there is evidence that at least some of the critics writing at the time of release were not discussing the films in this way. Likewise, with regard to *Kelly's Heroes*, there is evidence that the critical community was discussing the film in terms of its relationship with the counterculture and the anti-war movement. However this is not reflected in academic engagement, especially in comparison with *Catch 22* and *M*A*S*H*.

The consequences of this are twofold. First, there is a tendency to remove the qualification that the anti-war reading is just one, albeit popular, way of understanding

*M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22*. The films are discussed as if they are anti-war in the definite, that meaning coming directly from, or somehow inherently found within them, or not, as with *Kelly's Heroes*. Second, it has meant that academic discussion of the films has potentially been stymied, not least because work is often framed by the same concept of the extent to which the films are or are not anti-war films, but also in that because multiple academics have reached similar conclusions about them there is potentially a perception that either work on these films is complete, or in the case of *Kelly's Heroes*, not required

Arising out of this discussion, the following questions provide a broad sense of the aims of the research:

How did *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* come to be perceived as having such a strong relationship with the Vietnam war, the anti-war movement and the counterculture, whilst *Kelly's Heroes* is far less frequently understood in this way?

What is the role of genre and the canon in this?

With reference to the above, to what extent is it possible to discover and track the ways in which certain trends develop within the discourse surrounding the films, encompassing both the impact of discrete events and the notions of genre and the canon?

In order to explore these questions this research examines texts which both directly and indirectly relate to the films to ascertain where a relationship with the Vietnam War is identified, and how this is seen to arise and manifest. This focuses on whether this relationship is more readily discussed in reference to specific events and aspects of the films, or in a way which foregrounds the films and film makers as agents of social change. It explores the extent to which reviewers themselves can be seen to conceive

of a difference between those concepts. Finally, it explores the factors which contribute to the development of differing trends and dominant themes within the discourse.

There is the question of categorisation, this work is not seeking to argue for the films it discusses inclusion or exclusion in one or another of them, but to ask what impact their categorisation by others has had. For instance it is perhaps that *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* are far more simply understood as falling within an anti-war category than *Kelly's Heroes*, and as such, when it comes to discussing the Vietnam war and films which were seen to be opposed to it, this informs the decision as to what films to reference. In effect, a simplistic categorisation, associated with an important historical moment, may have led to canonisation. *Kelly's Heroes* by virtue of its absence from that same canon, and to a larger extent its absence from discussions surrounding war films and the Vietnam war can be used to comparatively question if *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* have been granted entry to the canon because they can be understood as within a category which can be aligned with a historically significant event relatively simply. Alternatively, it may be as prudent to question the extent to which the perpetuation of the understanding those films in these relatively simplistic and reductive terms has been a consequence of their inclusion that canon. Here, again, *Kelly's Heroes* as occupying a position outside of that, serves as a comparator.

Few academics argue that *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* are nothing but anti-war films; far more frequently anti-war sentiments are identified in tandem with a relationship with the counterculture, or are seen to exist alongside the comedic aspects of the film. However a significant proportion of academic discussions of the films do discuss anti-war and other notions such as anti-establishment or anti-military as forms of genre category. At times these less frequently used genre categorisations usurp others completely. In these instances 'anti-war' can in effect be viewed as a genre categorisation in itself, with its own set of associations and expectations. What is problematic is that this

categorisation then informs or directs academic analysis of the films meaning that they are consistently approached from a perspective that takes that categorisation as its starting point and places it at the centre of the analysis.

As such, largely, the discussion of all three films in academia, for slightly differing reasons, can be viewed as to some extent reductive and in some regards misleading. It assumes a position from which the films are understood in one predominant way, which has become at least the starting point of the majority of academic analysis and in some cases the total of it. In the face of a way of understanding the films which has become so widely accepted, for some, that analysis seems to have become almost redundant. Addressing this is important because of the importance attached to the films themselves. Because *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* are consistently referred to as not just a reflection of, or an aspect of, the anti-Vietnam counterculture movement, but as a part of it, their position within a key aspect of an important historical and cultural turning point in North American history cannot be assumed and deserves interrogation.

Alongside the questions above, which aim to improve our understanding of the films and the ways they were discussed, this work is also concerned, methodologically, with genre. Genre is used by academics, the critical community, the audience and those making and marketing the films to structure and inform, amongst other things, their discussions of them. However, because categories can be seen to fluctuate so much it becomes almost unavoidable that the answer to the question 'what genre is it?' will not at least partially be influenced by the culturally specific position the text occupies. This work attempts to understand this cultural specificity, developing a potentially more comprehensive and holistic understanding of the films. As such, this work asks not what genre these films are, but what genres they have, and continue to be perceived as. Beyond this, it asks how changes in the discourses surrounding the films and the perceptions of genre associated with them come about, assessing the links between

those changes and notions such as their perceived popularity, cultural status or even the amount of attention the films have received in academia.

Methodological Statement

The introduction to this research has highlighted pervasive issues in academic work concerning *M*A*S*H*, *Catch 22* and *Kelly's Heroes*. Primarily, that in contemporary academia there has been a tendency towards relatively simplistic readings of these films that have focused on perceived relationships with the anti-war movement or the counterculture. These readings are attributed to, or seen to originate with, critics, journalists, the film-makers and those who marketed the films. In some cases these readings have also been mapped onto, or seen as indicative of audience responses. These readings are persistent and pervasive and have, in most circumstances, over time, come to be the dominant ways in which the films are discussed.

The introduction also cites a number of sources which appear to contradict those readings of both *Catch 22* and *M*A*S*H* and which might suggest they could be applied to *Kelly's Heroes* when they have not been. There is evidence to suggest that at various points the critical and academic responses to these films understood them in ways that vary from the current dominant understanding. For instance, *Kelly's Heroes* has been understood variously as an action film, a comedy, a war film and within the rubric of Clint Eastwood as a hyper masculine personality. These various interpretations are discussed in depth the second chapter of this work. However, simply noting that the ways in which the film has been discussed and understood have changed so dramatically serves to indicate the fluidity inherent in textual interpretation, and demonstrates the limitations of the notion that there is a single set way a text can or should be interpreted. As Barbara Klinger argues in *Melodrama & Meaning*: "textual meanings are negotiated by external agencies, whether they be academic modes of interpretation, practices of the film industry, or film reviews set within a particular

historical landscape.” (Klinger, 1994:xvi) Out of this notion arises the set of questions and aims outlined earlier in the introduction surrounding the perceived relationship between *M*A*S*H*, *Catch 22*, *Kelly’s Heroes*, the Vietnam War and the roles of genre and the canon. Because these questions are concerned specifically with the ways in which those films have been perceived, the aim is to explore and utilise a methodology which is grounded in analysis of those perceptions.

In *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema*, Janet Staiger explores the strengths and weaknesses of what she calls “[a] historical materialist approach”. This approach, does not just note the need to evaluate texts in context but makes that need central - “a historical materialist epistemology assumes an interaction among context, text and individual”(Staiger, 1992:79). Whilst the historical materialist approach forms the methodological basis for *Interpreting Films* Staiger dedicates an early chapter to exploring the key issues. A short discussion of critical and academic responses to *Rear Window* serves to draw these out.

Staiger is not concerned with analysing *Rear Window* and searching for what she calls “hypothetical evidence for what spectators are doing” (Staiger, 1992:91), but with ‘responses’ to the film. These responses are those of the critical and academic communities published both soon after, and many years after the release of the film. As such, Staiger makes use of sources that are very similar to those that form the basis of the work undertaken in this thesis - the critical reviews that seem to clearly offer alternative readings of *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* than more recent academic works.

The use of these texts acknowledges that the purpose of the study is to attempt to discover and track what people thought about the films, and that any direct analysis of the film texts themselves cannot stand in here for analysis of perceptions of that text. Klinger, who makes extensive use of Staiger’s historical materialist approach is careful to note that at no time within *Melodrama & Meaning* is “conventional textual analysis”

employed; expressly there is no desire to “[roll] back the historical meanings to produce the “real” meaning of the film in question” (Klinger, 1997:xx). (The quotation marks around ‘real’ serve to highlight the contentious nature of the notion of film texts having fixed intrinsic meanings). “The research should serve as an attempt to constitute the era's reactions by historical research” (Staiger, 1992:87). The study of texts written about the films by those who have viewed them provides access to the opinions of an audience who can be seen as especially involved with the discourse within which dominant understandings develop and evolve.

However one consequence of this approach is to restrict the voice of the audience to those who have, or have had, the opportunity to write about the films and to have this writing recorded. Because this material is largely generated by the critical and academic community it must be understood within that context of a small but well informed audience. As such, this audience cannot be seen as representative of the audience at large. However, it does carry with it a degree of authority in that it can be assumed that both the critical and academic community have a degree of competence, as well as possessing a well-developed vocabulary for conveying through writing their opinions about films, especially in comparison with the wider (non-critical) audience. Beyond this, there is some evidence to suggest that critics occupy a privileged position within the wider audience as arbiters of opinion who may exert some degree of influence over that audience (Eliashberg and Shugan, 1997:68-78)(Boatwright, Basuroy and Kamkura, 2007:401-425). A further benefit of focusing on these sources as key text subjects for this research is that it was the interaction between academic work and reviews which informed the key aims and questions this work seeks to address. That is, the reviews that appear to contradict the current dominant understanding of *M*A*S*H*, *Catch 22* and *Kelly's Heroes* can be found amongst the primary sources that this work makes use of.

The object(s) of study then becomes a continuum of utterances (here, primarily reviews and academic criticism) and the relationships between them and the contexts in which they are published. Effectively “[w]e can use the term text to mean the observable product of interaction; and discourse to mean the process of interaction itself” (Talbot, 2007:9). Wortham and Reyes’ discussion in *Discourse Analysis, Beyond the Speech Event* (2015) of Miyako Inoue’s work on language and gender (2006) provides some useful ways of considering this. This is particularly because Inoue makes use of similar types of print media texts to this research, but also because the study of those texts is used to track and trace a change in Japanese womens’ language that is heavily tied to the hierarchical social positions of the speakers. Wortham and Reyes show how this social aspect, here the adoption by ‘upper class’ families of speech associated with the geisha, is evident in a single, isolated text. However, linking this text to a number of others serves to solidify the link between speech and social status, as well as drawing out a further potential aspect of the discourse; that adoption of speech associated with those of a lower social status is damaging to those who adopt it. Beyond this, these links are made between texts which appear many years apart. By doing this Inoue is able to understand changes in attitudes displayed within the texts analysed both within their relationships with each other and also within the context of the social climate in which they were written.

This relationship between the discrete text and its context is highlighted in the acknowledgement that the author of those (and all) texts is writing for “an imagined audience of possible readers and aiming for certain effects on that audience” (Wortham and Reyes. 2015:111). Staiger refers to “‘imaginary selves,’ the subject positions taken up by individual readers and spectators” (Staiger, 1992:81). This must be acknowledged both in the potential ramifications it has for the ways in which those groups interact with texts but also in the ramifications of ourselves existing (as future readers) in different contexts potentially outside of that group of imagined readers.

Wortham and Reyes state that “Inoue uses discourse analysis beyond the speech event to trace the solidifying pathways across which historical change occurred” (Wortham and, Reyes 2015:115). Effectively, the texts which she draws upon occupy a place within the wider discourse as both markers of that historical change, but also as agents of it. This is most evident in relation to the social hierarchies they refer to in that they both rely on the reader having an understanding of those hierarchies to infer their meanings, but also in that they cannot be detached from the process of changing or reinforcing attitudes towards them. This is a key area in which the work presented here builds upon the methodological work of Staiger and Klinger. Like their work, the research presented here is fundamentally concerned with the ways in which the films it studies were perceived and how those perceptions change over time. However, it does not seek to explore “single practices within original moments of reception”, but serves as a response to Klinger’s call to action, seeking to develop a method by which it becomes possible to discover how “films and other media products come to mean *different* things in *different* contexts throughout the course of their life spans.” (Klinger, 1997:xvii)

Revolving around, or understood through the rubric of categorisations such as ‘anti-war movie’ or ‘comedy’, it is clear that genre is central to the changes which occur in perceptions of *M*A*S*H*, *Catch 22* and *Kelly’s Heroes*. Mittell, who, within a research context that focusses on television rather than film texts, argues that “[g]enres should be situated within larger systems of cultural hierarchies and power relations” (Mittell, 2001:18), drawing on “larger distinctions such as aesthetic value, audience identity, codes of realism, and hierarchies of taste” (Mittell, 2001:19). As such, and despite the differing research contexts, Mittell espouses a similar methodology to Staiger, arguing that:

[W]e should follow the model of Foucauldian genealogy, emphasizing breadth over depth and collecting as many discursive instances surrounding a given instance of generic process as we can. (Mittell, 2001:17).

Clearly this resonates with the notion of the study of the decentralised text and the context within which it was made and consumed, which this work adopts. However the reality of this notion is that the study of the discourses which surround *M*A*S*H*, *Catch 22* and *Kelly's Heroes* requires that they be understood in more manageable and discrete parts. That is, on a basic level, the sheer volume of material may preclude its effective study in any qualitative way (though there is a discussion in the conclusion of this work that posits some potential quantitative ways of addressing these issues). Equally, it is inevitable that there are texts which are not recorded as accessible sources such as verbal utterances, lost television broadcasts and un-archived newspaper articles. This issue is addressed by taking as the subject of this work a significant amount of material which can be seen as representative. This is with the acknowledgement that other sources which may have informed that material may not be available, or even that their having once existed will not be immediately obvious.

The potential diversity in terms of the range of source type, and the nature and the links between them, precludes the use of a method designed to assess the relevance of a text and thus impose bounds upon inclusion. As such, whilst it should be noted that this research assumes the position that no text exists in isolation, to maintain the scope of the project within the bounds of manageability, some of those texts and links must be prioritised. These are primarily, but not universally, those which can be seen to have had influenced a large number of others, those which represent dramatic departures from prevailing paradigms, or can be seen as especially representative. This final condition is, of course, true of the project as a whole; the impossibility of collecting all relevant sources is acknowledged, not just in that those sources may not be available

(particularly in the case of newspaper reviews and articles which are over forty years old) but also to acknowledge a significant number of very similar texts would increase the scale of the project without adding significant value.

At the beginning of the second chapter of *Melodrama and Meaning*, Klinger discusses the ways in which studios tapped into social changes occurring throughout the 1950s to promote melodrama films. This is understood explicitly as an investigation of the ways in which studios were “[constructing] meaning for melodramas by defining genre and style in accord with postwar discourses on sex and affluence” (Klinger, 1994:37). The notion of meaning being constructed speaks to Klinger’s conclusion that whilst the films she is discussing are not identifiably ‘adult’ in terms of content in any readily identifiable way, they are identified as such by the studios in a (successful attempt) to link them to dominant cultural ideas, which have in turn become major aspects of discourses which continue to revolve around those films today. The drawing of links between cultural context and the film text via its marketing and reviews is comparable to the work undertaken here. As such, the work of Klinger (and Staiger), can be seen to provide a methodological basis for this work, upon which the aim of discovering whether it is possible to trace changes in discourses surrounding films, in the manner of Inoue, can potentially be built.

The method employed involves the analysis of sources, and relationships between sources, which discuss *M*A*S*H*, *Catch 22* and *Kelly’s Heroes* directly. Where it is helpful to do so, these sources are contextualised with analysis of further sources which pertain to the wider cultural milieu, primarily throughout the late 1960s and the early 1970s, but also throughout the period since the release of the films. These sources primarily take the form of newspaper articles, reviews and marketing materials. They are discussed in relation to one another, seeking to thematically link sources within a chronology that is largely, but not universally, presented in order of the date of

publication. The way in which the work is structured (with a chapter focusing on each of the three films) also means that some sources which temporally speaking are very close, in that they may have been published at very similar times, are discussed within different contexts within different parts of the project. This is particularly noticeable throughout the discussion of overarching ideas, but also because the release dates of *Catch 22* and *Kelly's Heroes* are so close together - the two analyses can be seen to be concurrent. This process of linking sources within a chronology is sometimes relatively transparent, with one source clearly relating to another in agreement, rebuttal or reference. However, because acknowledging that the operation of these links is potentially as important as analysis of the texts themselves, where less obvious links between sources are made the operation of these links is explored in more detail.

For example, one potentially important link between sources which occurs frequently within the texts discussed throughout this work, especially marketing materials and reviews, is the use of the same quotes across multiple sources. Where extensive use is made of quotes from reviews the advertising for the film cannot be viewed simply as the product of a marketing team. The process of building a campaign which relies on quotes to construct an impression of the film involves some sort of mediation and curation of those sources. Whilst planning the marketing strategy will inevitably involve the setting out of a clear idea of the way in which the film is to be portrayed, it is potentially unavoidable that this will to some extent be led by the available material. So, should a review that makes use of a quote from a film director be understood in context of the review, or in context of the original quote? With this work it may be necessary to do both - to acknowledge and understand the link between those texts which make use of quotes, and those from which they are lifted. It is possible to discuss marketing and critical discourse as somehow influencing the ways in which people understand films as isolated instances. However, the use of quotes serves as a concrete example of the absolutely connected nature of that process. As such, the concept of marketing and

reviews existing in isolation, serving only to shape perceptions about a specific film, is problematic. Kerrigan's discussion of the role of market research in film marketing (Kerrigan, 2010:42) as well as examples such as the way in which film posters are drawn upon as one of key ways of illustrating changing genre preferences in series like *The History of American Cinema* (Cook, 2000:259) serve to highlight this.

This introduction and methodology have begun to explore some issues surrounding the development of dominant understandings, context, discourse and the decentralised text which run throughout this project. Because one of the goals of this research is to better understand, and conceive of potentially better ways of researching some of these notions these should not be seen as a set of strict rules but as a starting point for methodological discussion which continues throughout this project.

Chapter One: *M*A*S*H*

People have been debating for months whether *M*A*S*H* is really an anti-war movie (Farber, 1970:218)

Pauline Kael (*The New Yorker*) and Roger Ebert (*The Chicago Sun Times*) reviewed *M*A*S*H* before the film was released to the public in late January of 1970. Both begin with discussions of *M*A*S*H* as a comedy film. Kael's overtly positive review begins by directly stating that "*M*A*S*H* is a marvellously unstable comedy" (Kael, 1970). Beyond this, much of the first paragraph is given to the explication of this accolade; "It's a sick joke, but it's also generous and romantic", "...some of the best overlapping comic dialogue ever recorded". "They (Donald Sutherland & Elliot Gould) do their surgery in style, with humor; they're hip Galahads, saving lives while ragging the military bureaucracy". Ebert is similarly concerned with what it is about *M*A*S*H* that makes the viewer laugh; his conclusion is partially that it is "because it is so true to the unadmitted sadist in all of us" (Ebert, 1970). The audience is given the opportunity to share in the practical jokes and align themselves with the protagonists against those they dislike. Equally, the cruelty of these jokes is a diversion from, a reflection of, and a consequence of, the war in which the protagonists are embroiled: "[m]ost comedies want us to laugh at things that aren't really funny; in this one we laugh because they're not funny. We laugh, that we may not cry." (Ebert, 1970). However for Ebert this is very explicitly marked as philosophising and as such secondary to "the peculiar marriage of cinematography, acting, directing and writing" (Ebert, 1970) which come together to make this film funny. Here lies the focus of both Ebert and Kael's reviews, a clear focus on the way in which the comedy of the film operates. *M*A*S*H*, viewed as a comedy film, and assessed by its ability to make the audience laugh.

On the 26th of January, a day after the first public screening of *M*A*S*H*, *TIME* magazine printed a review of the film headlined "Cinema: *Catch 22* Caliber" (Time

Magazine, 1970). The opening line of this review echoes the self-proclaimed 'philosophy' of Ebert's review: "[a]nd if I laugh at any mortal thing,/ Tis that I may not weep," wrote Byron. That philosophical fragment accounts for the duality of all black farce; looking between the cracks, one catches glimpses of hell." (Time Magazine, 1970). For the reviewer this is perhaps the essence of *M*A*S*H*, a film which, for all its comedic moments is unflinching not only in its depiction of the physical effect of war (the review repeatedly calls attention to the bloodiness of the film) but also its psychological effect. In this review, that the comedy of the set pieces will be self-evident in their description is assumed. It describes the comedic scenes, but does not seek to explain them. However the aim seems more to describe through examples the extent of the pervading irrational and irreverent behaviour. For the reviewer this is of primary importance. When it is argued that "[a]t the 4077th Mobile Army Surgical Hospital, nothing is sacred because everyone is scared—of the incipient madness that seeps back from the front" (Time Magazine, 1970) it is the irrationality in the mode of Yossarian's bid to escape the war in *Catch 22* (by acting irrationally) which supports this madness, and it is the irreverence which supports the lack of respect for what is sacred. That "*M*A*S*H*. begins where other anti-war films end—after the shells have exploded" (Time Magazine, 1970) is in itself presented as part of this madness, whilst no shots are fired at the enemy during the film (two are fired in total, to begin the halves of a football game) the description of the results of bullets, that "men bleed on-camera in great arterial gushes" (Time Magazine, 1970) is relatively graphic. The review ends by arguing that "War assaults taste, language, sense itself. So do the soldiers who fight it. So do the doctors who aid the soldiers" (Time Magazine, 1970) a perhaps damning indictment, which is then extended: "So does *M*A*S*H*." (Time Magazine, 1970).

In its evocation of *Catch-22*, its understanding of *M*A*S*H* as perhaps something more than a film made to make an audience laugh and its hint that this unresolved concept is an anti-war sentiment, this review contains many elements and tropes which will

reappear in other reviews and articles later in the year. When these do appear they are largely in response to events which serve to solidify these concepts and effect a noticeable change in the ways in which the film is discussed and referred to in a broader range of newspapers. However whilst this review can be seen as predicting and summarising some of the concepts which will, often in more considered ways, populate the articles and newspaper reviews which follow, alongside the reviews of Kael and Ebert it can be seen that above all else *M*A*S*H* is viewed at this early stage in comedic terms. That is, in spite of discussions surrounding what is deemed to be the unusual way it is achieved the film is not largely being written about as having any other purpose than to generate laughter. Even if there is a sense that irrationality is a key part of this comedy, especially when it is contextualised with the realism of the surgery scenes in the film, these observations are not resolved into any meaningful interpretation. In January of 1970 *M*A*S*H* is viewed as nothing more than a slightly idiosyncratic and daring comedy film.

“They get their message across” – February 1970

Vernon Scott’s review in the St. Petersburg Times (printed on the 12th of February, soon after the general release of *M*A*S*H*) begins: “If you haven’t seen a movie in years, make a point to see *M*A*S*H*. It will bring you up to date instantly” (Scott, 1970). The film is also described as a “now picture” and it is stated that “*M*A*S*H* should be seen by those who are not up to date with the latest developments in Hollywood output, or are bored with “studio clichés”” (Scott, 1970). These assertions suggest a modernity which for Scott is evident in a combination of “irreverence, sexiness, profanity and hilarity”. Sexiness and profanity were, depending how they manifested, key targets of censorship prior to changes to the US ratings system in 1968 and 1970. Referring to the acting abilities of Gould and Sutherland Scott states: “they underplay each scene, but they get their message across” (Scott, 1970). After this: “AND THAT is the point, or part of it” (Scott, 1970; capitals in original). The way in which the film is perceived as

having a message or a point at all is tied to Scott's concept of it as modern, a "now picture" which somehow engages with current issues. These issues, which are posited as a primary aspect of its appeal encompass both the issue of changes to censorship, and again, in a similar assertion to those made by Ebert and in Time Magazine, the nature of war. Scott states that "...every serviceman past and present knows - war is a personal battle against madness" (Scott, 1970) hinting that the film is perhaps allegorical (or even directly representative) of a more existential struggle. However, as with Ebert, this is again just one aspect of the film, one that sits alongside, and relates to its modernity, its sexiness, its profanity, and its hilarity, as an aspect of its appeal.

Richard Schickel's review for Life Magazine, printed on the 20th of February also understands the film as having some sort of 'point', but Schickel is equally unwilling to commit to a definite description of what that may entail. He argues that whilst the film has an improvised feel "all concerned are sure about what they are doing, what they mean to say" (Schickel, 1970). The use of "all concerned" rather than the 'cast' implies that the actors, who can be seen as the individual agents of that improvisation, are viewed as part of a larger collective comprising the director, crew and producers, etc. This is a group which is potentially seen to have some sort of agenda other than to make an entertaining film. However here again there is the sense that this agenda stems from the film makers decision to mix comedy with realistic and horrifying surgery scenes or, perhaps more importantly, horrifying surgery scenes which arise from combat situations. Schickel writes that *M*A*S*H's* "humor is not, as they say, in good taste. War is not in good taste either". A significant proportion of the review is given to describing particular scenes or character dynamics from the movie with the aim of explaining how the protagonists use/create comedic situations as a way of dealing with the terrible realities of the situation they have been placed in, similar to Scott's assertion that "war is a personal battle against madness"(Scott, 1970), Schickel posits

the protagonists as “Robin Hoods of rationalism ... doling it out in lifesaving doses to the little guys caught up in the mess. ” (Schickel, 1970).

In these early reviews, Scott, Schickel and Ebert present the film as at least partially concerned with the philosophical question of the effect that war has on those people involved in fighting it. For these reviewers there is a definite sense that war relates to madness, both in the literal chaos of the battle arena, and the madness which perhaps inevitably accompanies the general enterprise of warfare and killing. This relates to Altman's on set declaration that “... this picture is about... is insanity” (Backstory: *M*A*S*H*, 2000) but also gives a sense that this way of understanding the film is related to something which is far more important than the film itself. At the close of his review Scott states that those who see the film will “come away with more than an evening of diversion” (Scott, 1970. *my italics*). Precisely what the audience will ‘come away’ with is not explicitly stated; however the implication is that the film has been made with the aim of providing something other than entertainment. Implicit within this is a hierarchical understanding of the role of films. Scott implies that a film made with the sole purpose of entertaining is less significant than a film which is seen as asking and perhaps answering significant questions surrounding the purpose of war and the individual's place within that. This sense of the film as having a meaningful and reflective relationship with a socially significant event such as war, which has widespread ramifications, is discussed here as ‘social commentary’. This, rather than a more explicit signifier (such as ‘anti-war’) speaks to the opaque nature of this way of understanding the film at this stage, both in terms of the unresolved purpose of this aspect of the film, and its target.

Scott and Schickel's reviews can be seen as contrasting with those of Kael and Ebert in that discussion of the comedic aspect of the film is far less present. Whilst comedy was the clear primary focus of those earlier reviews it becomes somewhat secondary

to the notion of the film as having something more significant to say in the reviews that follow. Whilst the discussion of the philosophical position of the film is far less extensive in these two reviews, they can be seen as having a similar outlook towards the film as the Time Magazine article. The difference though is that the Time Magazine review explicitly relates the comedy of the film to its position as an anti-war, or at least as a social commentary text, not only in its invocation of Byron: "[a]nd if I laugh at any mortal thing,/ Tis that I may not weep," (Time Magazine, 1970) but also in its invocation of *Catch 22*'s Yossarian. The personal battle against the madness of war is seen as having the wider consequence of being a battle against war itself. Scott and Schickel's reviews do not tie these two notions together. The social commentary aspect of the film is definitely identified, but how it operates is left unexplored. The notion of war as insanity is separate from comedic irrationality. So here, in these reviews published soon after the release of the film, there is a subtle shift away from a focus on the comedy of the film, and the very beginnings of a sense of the film as social commentary. Most important though is that this sense of the film is separated out from its position as a comedy film. Its social commentary arises out of the characters battle with madness alone, something which does not seem to be funny at all.

It is possible to view the ways in which social commentary is discussed in these reviews as akin to a genre categorization. The separation of the comedy of *M*A*S*H* and its 'social commentary' aspect is perhaps linked to the reviewers perception of the value of those two genres. Social commentary as a genre encompasses less specificity in terms of aims than the 'anti-war' film. There is a sense that it is saying something important, but without a coherent sense of what, why or how. 'How' is especially relevant, and is most evident when comparing the review which appears in Time Magazine, which views the comedy of the film as an inherent aspect of its position on war with the reviews of Scott and Schickel, who discuss the social commentary of the

film as perhaps important in its own right, but as operating outside of and independently of the comedy of the film.

The Press Book

Analysis of the marketing material is carried out here for two key reasons. The first, perhaps self-evident reason is that by doing so it becomes possible to discern how the studio considered the film should best be sold at the time of release. As significant though is the way in which use of quotes taken from critics' reviews is ubiquitous throughout the marketing for *M*A*S*H*, representing an important divergence of the critical and marketing positions. The press book is not dated, however the majority of the newspaper adverts and posters it includes quote reviews of the film. A quote from Shickel's review in Life Magazine, published on the 12 February is the latest, all of the other quotes used in the press book predate this one. The use of quotes in the press book signals that it has been completed after the release of the film, and after a number of potentially influential critics have published reviews and criticism of it. It is possible then, especially because of the extensive use of quotes, that the press book marketing is influenced to a large extent by those reviews and reviewers. That is, that those marketing the film took their cues from the critical community. It is effectively a question of whether those marketing the film had a pre-determined notion of what the marketing should comprise, and simply selected quotes from within the corpus of critical work to suit their needs, or if the marketing arose out of that corpus in a more complete way, dictating its direction from the point of conception. Because the quotes are selected from existing reviews, as opposed to written specifically for the marketing, when they are analysed with their status as selected in mind, it becomes possible to identify certain areas of focus. Equally though it is acknowledged that this could operate the other way around. Without evidence of the process by which the generation of the marketing material was undertaken it is difficult to definitively discern the extent to which either of these positions is the case. However it should be noted

that the need to highlight them at all would not be present were the marketing material to make no use of critical material in this fashion. So whilst the critical community can be seen as especially involved in the mediation of meaning with regards to the film, in that they effectively contribute to its marketing, these quotes should be taken within that context. Their sole purpose, regardless of the thrust of the original review becomes, in the marketing context, to promote the film.

Some of the larger posters or adverts use multiple quotes and others use only a single quote with an image or the title of the film. As such the quotes the marketing makes use of do not exist in isolation. They are almost universally accompanied by an image, aside from two which feature cast members, of a masculine hand grafted onto a pair of feminine legs, topped with a military helmet adorned with the U.S. Flag. A brief analysis of this image is useful to both contextualise and inform discussion of the quotes which accompany it. The hand is posed in a “V- Sign” (index and middle fingers parted in a 'V' with the palm facing outwards). This sign carries an inherent ambiguity when it is not qualified or explained. Especially when considered with the helmet the image carries a military connotation, perhaps relating to the symbolic use of the V sign widely used at the end of WWII to signify 'V for Victory'. The sign was later used within the anti-Vietnam War movement to signify peace (or at least a desire toward peace); however this use did not replace any other earlier use, as evidenced by President Nixon's use of the symbol when declaring victory in Vietnam. In effect an American viewing the *M*A*S*H* poster may have been aware of any, all or none of these connotations (for instance the sign could equally simply signify the number two). The legs onto which the hand is grafted, and the helmet, reinforce this duality. The helmet, with its prominently placed flag takes the image into the realms of the military, specifically the U.S military. Here the image flags the institution about which the film revolves. The legs are, taken

alone, an image of sexualised femininity, a pair of high heels adorns them, one askew under foot, and they are naked up to the point of merging with the hand.

It is possible to see represented by the hand at the top, the doctors, proficiently serving their country whilst at the same time undermining its military leadership. Below, women are objectified, necessary only aesthetically, other than, given their status as disembodied legs (they are in effect doing the walking for someone, or something, else) to allow the masculine hand left free to indulge in its sign making. Potentially the legs are also evocative of a perceived relationship between the military and sex, and beyond this the activities of military men whilst on leave in foreign countries. Kathleen Barry argues that “[m]assive, industrialised prostitution was set in motion by foreign militaries” (Barry, 1995:138), specifically referring to Asian countries, and this is something which is explicitly referenced in the film². As such the legs can potentially be

² Extract from the script for *M*A*S*H*:

Hawkeye and Duke are driving the Jeep along the muddy road – they come upon a sign which fills a large part of the screen: “Last chance before Peking”. A short distance behind the sign, it is now revealed are three parked U.S. Army trucks, in front of which parades a group of Korean prostitutes from fourteen to forty-five.

Despite the autumn weather their costumes, mixed American mail order and Korean, are chosen for seductive appeal rather than warmth.

HAWKEYE

Must be the Famous Curb Service Whore

–(pronounced 'howah')House. You in the market Duke?

seen to contribute to a reading of the image as representative of the anti-war movement in their incongruity, likewise the 'V-Sign' used as a symbol of peace after a time of war.

However, this kind of analysis is perhaps possible only in retrospect. That is, having seen the film it is possible to assign these meanings to each part of the image. Coming to the poster without these pre-conceptions it can still be read as a marker of what a prospective audience member might expect from the film, however it becomes far more ambiguous. Individually, it can be assumed from the helmet that the film takes place within the rubric of the American military. The hand, depending, could show the men to be patriotic victors, or irreverent anti-military, or even anti-war characters. The latter seems perhaps more likely, given that the hand is literally grafted onto a pair of female legs, clearly not associated with the military and more clearly still, a sexualised image. Beyond this the juxtaposition of the legs and hand, grafted together, is likely to be read as surreally comedic. The difference then between a reading which relates to the film directly and one which aims to take the image at face value becomes a question of what is not immediately evident: - that the film is about doctors. The title *M*A*S*H* is the only part of the poster which makes it evident that the film is based within a field hospital. As with the images there is, without refactoring the research framework to encompass an audience research element, no real way of knowing if the acronym meant anything to American audiences in 1970. There is no evidence within the newspaper articles and reviews of the film of any discussion of the marketing material for the film itself, and as such there is no way of assessing the ways in which these

DUKE

(in negation)

I done my shopping in Seoul last night.

aspects of the marketing material were interpreted. The aim here is not to argue that there is any 'correct' interpretation. What is clear though in the above discussion is that regardless of the various ways in which various aspects of the image could potentially be interpreted there are three clear constants, the sexualised nature of the image, the military connection, and the more general sense of comic surrealism associated with the 'grafted' nature of the two body parts.

Perhaps to counterbalance the relative ambiguity of the image a number of the quotes are used to establish genre. Judith Crist of NBC-TV is quoted: "Without a doubt the funniest service comedy I have ever seen". Here the genre of the film is referred to explicitly as a 'service comedy' - the assertion that it is 'the funniest' indicates quality, that the film is the best in the category of 'service comedies' and this quality arises out of its ability to generate laughter. Likewise Pauline Kael is quoted: "*M*A*S*H* is the best American war comedy since sound came in". As the film is declared to be a 'service' or 'war' comedy the number of likely meanings that could be assigned to the image begins to reduce. The helmet remains a clear marker of the military, and the strangeness of the hand grafted to the legs can be read as comedic. Kael's is one of the quotes more frequently utilised throughout the marketing material. The choice of this quote over some of the others is perhaps as much about indicating genre as much as quality, but it also carries with it a number of other implications. What are in fact caveats to the assertion that the film is 'the best' actually serve to indicate a number of significant things about it. Whilst the assertion that the film is 'the best American ...' potentially indicates that there are war comedies from other territories which are superior to it, it does not read as a reference to the film's status as a product of an American company or American director. It seems that the assertion is that the film is somehow inherently American, about American people or issues, and also for them. Kael's quote also gives the film a temporal context, whilst the forty or so years since sound had become commonplace in movies is sufficiently long enough to indicate the

films quality as the 'best' within that time, it also indicates that the film is somehow different from those war comedies which came before or with the advent of sound. This is not to argue that Kael is saying that the film is somehow inherently modern, though she may well be, but to note that the demarcation between pre and post sound is perhaps significant in that it indicates a difference between *M*A*S*H* and those earlier films. The era in which sound came about also carries with it connotations not only of a specific temporal realm but perhaps also of particular wars. The quote is potentially referring specifically to Chaplin's first film with sound *The Great Dictator*, frequently understood as a war comedy but with arguably very different concerns to *M*A*S*H*, superficially, the mocking of the lone, fascist leader of the (soon to be) enemy of the American people, rather than the military leadership in general, and specifically the American military hierarchy.

Appearing on a number of the posters and adverts as the only quote, and also concerned with this sense of the film as somehow differing from the expectations associated with, perhaps the genre, but also 'traditional' film in general, is Richard Schickel's quote from Life Magazine. This reads: "*M*A*S*H* is what the new freedom of the screen is all about". The new freedom, taken literally is almost certainly a reference to the R rating of the film. The R rating was part of a new ratings system introduced in the US in 1968. The rating was new category which allowed more adult content than the restrictive Hays Code. The rating allowed film makers greater freedom to include material in their films which depicted violence (or the aftermath thereof), language, sexual content, nudity and substance abuse. Whilst the depiction of drug taking is debated with regard to *M*A*S*H*, it certainly does contain scenes of nudity, sexual conduct and language which at the time of release would not have been deemed appropriate within the defunct Hays code. What is significant though is that the film was given the R rating as opposed to the X rating. The X rating was far more permissive as to what could be depicted, but in 1970 was restricted to those over the age of 17 only.

The 'new freedom' to which Schickel refers then is one which operates both in terms of an expansion in what can, and cannot be shown but also in terms of the audience to whom that output becomes accessible. This potential engagement with the discourse surrounding the new ratings system is not specifically limited to the relationship between *M*A*S*H* and its rating. The introduction of the ratings system had generated a significant degree of debate throughout the sixties, especially with regard to two films, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* and *Blow Up*, which Jack Valenti (the president of the MPAA) felt were subjected to cuts which imposed unwarranted restraint on the film maker's freedom of expression. What is significant though is the language used throughout this debate was explicitly related to:

"insurrections on the campus, riots in the streets, rise in women's liberation, protest of the young, doubts about the institution of marriage, abandonment of old guiding slogans, and the crumbling of social traditions" (Valenti, 1991:1).

Language which indicates that the discourse was at least partially informed by a notion of the films as artistically, or culturally significant. "The new freedom of the screen" understood in this context is evocative of a wider set of concerns surrounding the artistic freedom of film makers, censorship and intent. These concerns, as oppositional to the Hays code, and more generally censorship, posit the film as something other than 'traditional' Hollywood fare. Traditional not as an exact dated category of films, or a specific type, but as a more opaque set of values and ideological stances, the opposition to which is fundamentally counter-cultural in nature.

Similarly, but perhaps far more explicitly, the final quote utilised on the advert which appears on the front page of the press book is from Time magazine: "*M*A*S*H* begins where other anti-war films end!" Here there is a clear genre categorisation, the film is explicitly, and without reservation an anti-war film. The invocation of 'other' anti-war films is significant though. Again, the quote operates by suggesting that there are other

things going on with *M*A*S*H* than its status as simply a 'good anti-war film'. However, this occurs primarily because the quote is cut short, the original text continues, reading: "*M*A*S*H* begins where other anti-war films end, when the fighting stops". The shortening of the quote lends it an ambiguity which allows the reader to build a personal notion of exactly how *M*A*S*H* differs from other anti-war films. Without the explanation that its reference to how *M*A*S*H* "begins" refers literally to its army hospital setting, and post-battle casualties, "begins" could take on a number of meanings. Relating it back to the quote from Richard Schickel, by offering other "anti-war" films in comparison, there is the implication that *M*A*S*H* somehow goes beyond those films in terms of its anti-war stance. Given that this advantage is gained in an arena defined by genre, and that here the genre is given as "anti-war" *M*A*S*H* is not just a better film generally, but is better at being an anti-war film. Clearly, being 'better' at being anti-war is a relatively abstract concept, but it is one that can be translated into the more literal realm of depictions of material, or more importantly opinions, which have hitherto been perceived as perhaps too provocative or inflammatory for other films to tackle.

Further to this, the editing of the Time quote serves to highlight the fundamentally constructed nature of the marketing material. The removal of the second part of the sentence is especially indicative of the way in which material generated by the critical community is used to further a specific notion of the film. Beyond this it shows how those marketing the film were specifically looking to utilise quotes which fitted with a pre-conceived notion of how to frame *M*A*S*H* for the best audience response. This is made especially clear when the quote is taken in the context of the wider article. As discussed earlier this presents notions of *M*A*S*H* as grounded within far more existential questions of the role of war and soldiers within that. To expect to convey the intricacies of that discussion in a single quote may be unrealistic, however the thrust of

the quote which is used, especially in its edited form, is very different in its notional representation of the film from the original.

The amount of advertising material to which each quote is applied throughout the press book varies, but one which appears extensively is that of Joseph Morgenstern, Newsweek: "A cockeyed masterpiece – see it twice". Here the assertion that the film is a 'masterpiece' ostensibly concerns its quality. However the use of a word that carries artistic connotations is significant. Essentially, by describing the film in terms more usually reserved for fine art the film is elevated to that position. Again there is a sense of the film as having more significance than entertainment, and all that this entails in terms of culturally defined hierarchies of the creative arts. The film as a masterpiece is juxtaposed with its status as 'cockeyed'. This is a phrase which again points more explicitly to comedy than other terms which might sit alongside 'masterpiece' yet still indicate its deviance from expectations, such as 'alternative'. The film is not being seen as 'traditional', and this difference is linked to its comedy, but it remains capable of wearing that difference within the rubric of artistic proficiency that allows the masterpiece label.

Whilst they are often not explicit in their categorisation, when the quotes and the image which make up the majority of the marketing materials of the press book are taken together they present a relatively coherent sense of the films genre. This is achieved primarily through the use of that same image throughout the advertising, and also through the use of quotes which have been selected to compliment and build upon each other. It is largely the comedic nature of the film which is presented as the key to its genre categorisation, with its status as an anti-war film, or the military focus as a secondary, but still a key aspect of that. Within that genre categorisation there is a sense of the film as modern, non-conformist, or even explicitly counter-cultural, but

again, this aspect of the film is secondary to it as a comedy. Even the image, which taken in isolation is relatively ambiguous, begins to take on this sense of the film as slightly surreal, sexually charged but ultimately amusing when it is understood in relation to the quotes which universally accompany it.

Perhaps then this sense of the marketing as building a notion of the film by layering meanings and associations appears to be at odds with the focus in this analysis on individual quotes. This could be allayed with the argument that beyond the press book, in the marketing for the film more generally (that is, in adverts found in newspaper and magazines), there is significant evidence of use of adverts which only feature a single quote and the hand/legs image. For some potential audience members, the 'single quote' advertisements may have been the only interaction with the *M*A*S*H* brand. However there still exists the potential for any given viewer to see more than one advertisement for the film, and so to see a number of different quotes relating to it. This relates to the discussion of the ways in which discourse operates in the introduction to this work. This analysis operates under the assumption that the posters and adverts for the film do not exist in isolation. There is potential for any given audience member to see multiple instances of similar posters, and so build a notional understanding of the film through those interactions. So whilst the posters with multiple quotes give a sense of the aims of those marketing the film with regard to how it is perceived by those in control of that marketing material, the way the film is understood through its advertising is entirely dependent on the specific aspects of the advertising an audience member interacts with, as well as a plethora of other material that is available surrounding a given film. Analysis of individual and isolated aspects of that advertising is useful to discern their particular focus, but is only truly useful when it is understood as an inherent part of the discourse surrounding the film. Here it would be potentially problematic to assume that the advertising is consistent both in terms of degrees of

exposure to any given audience, but also in terms of its actual make up. The latter is far more significant here in that, unlike a measure of how many, or which adverts any given audience member came into contact with, it is actually measurable. So whilst the press book itself presents a relatively coherent and consistent understanding of the film, it can be seen to represent that only in relation to the intentions of those marketing the film at the time of release. As such, this work returns to the advertising for the film later in the chapter to highlight the way in which individual promoters and theatres utilise and alter the marketing material. This is significant in that theatres showing the film and the dates of those showings are both temporally and geographically diverse, and as such could respond to changes in the discourse as it progresses. By then investigating the similarities and differences between the press book advertising and adverts which appeared in newspapers later in the 1970s it is potentially possible to view both the original studio marketing and some promoters as actively tapping into contemporary debates surrounding the film, the cast and the Vietnam War.

The Military Ban – March 1970

In March an article appeared in the Reading Eagle, a newspaper serving the Pennsylvania area, with the headline “Film’s Director is Happy Over Ban by Military” (U.P.I., 1970). This article reported that *M*A*S*H* had been deemed to “reflect unfavourably on the military” (U.P.I., 1970) and “ridicule military medicine so severely that it left the viewer with “no confidence in the system”” (U.P.I., 1970). It reported that as a consequence the film was banned from army and air force bases. Significantly the film is understood here explicitly as an anti-war film. Unlike the majority of the earlier reviews there is no evidence of any reticence with regard to the position of the film in this sense. Whilst Scott and Shickel’s reviews never resolve their sense of the film as social commentary into a solid sense of it as an anti-war statement, and the Time Magazine review grounds this within a more philosophical reading of the film, here the

anti-war position of the film is presented as a statement which needs little support. It is reinforced however by quotes from director Robert Altman.

Altman is presented in the headline as being happy about the ban; the article explains that this is ostensibly because of the increased publicity this could bring the film. Later in the article, and within his role as director Altman is presented as an authority as to the ostensible aims of the film, which speak to a sense of potentially increased success as a consequence of the ban: "Every soldier who gets a three day pass is going to see *M*A*S*H* now" (U.P.I, 1970). However the article also includes the statement from Altman that the film is "anti-war, not anti-army and you kind of hope the Army would be anti-war too" (U.P.I, 1970). The quote is a response to the supposition that the military banned the film because of the way it portrayed the *M*A*S*H* unit, a concern about the public perception of the army and sense of belief in it. However, Altman's hope that "the Army would be anti-war too" slightly re-factors the ban as being about war more generally. The implication is that the film is banned not because of its depiction of the military, but because it is an anti-war film. It is a subtle distinction between anti-war and anti-military, but by refusing to acknowledge that the film is anti-military, Altman and the author of the article take away the ostensible reason for the ban from the military, not only reinforcing the notion of the film as anti-war, but also appearing to confirm that this is indeed the reason behind the ban.

An integral aspect of this is also the language used to convey the reasoning behind the ban. The second of only two direct quotes from the statement which outlined the ban uses the term "no confidence in the system" (the first direct quote is simply the two words "reflected unfavourably" (U.P.I, 1970)). The 'system' can be reasonably be assumed to refer to the system of military hierarchy that dictates that injured men will receive good care in *M*A*S*H* unit hospitals. It also carries with it far wider, potentially counter-cultural associations. The 'system' could easily be construed here as the

system within which the US government goes to, and justifies going to war; that is, a social system designed to oppress certain factions of society (Grieg, 29:1970). As such, whilst the film's director is seen as having the definitive last word on what position the film occupies, it is also potentially tied linguistically to the counterculture anti-Vietnam war movement with a phrase that significantly arises from the military themselves. By extension (and although they state that their primary concern is with the depiction of military medicine in the film) the Army and Air Force review board not only see the film as anti-war, but also understand their own position within the system which seeks to suppress that message.

Direct quotes from the military review board run to only seven words in a total of ninety six for the article as a whole, whilst exposition of the decision excluding those direct quotes runs to forty-five words. That is, it is relatively evident that rather than utilising the text from the statement which outlines the decision directly, the author has exercised far greater control over the way in which it is framed by presenting it in their own words, selecting only those which suit the agenda of the article ("the system") out of a far larger text. The article can be seen to be the first to posit *M*A*S*H* directly and explicitly as an anti-war film as the sole genre categorisation. This is in turn an aspect of a carefully constructed relationship with counterculture notions of the oppressive system of government as separate from the people. Here 'anti-war' is the essence of the film rather than an element of it, it cannot be seen to arise directly from any specific aspect of the film (by way of its plot or dialogue for instance). This sure and steadfast position is in contrast to those reviews which come before the ban. As such this can be seen as the prime catalyst giving rise to this way of understanding *M*A*S*H*. An anti-war film arising less out of its content, but out of a combination of events which were beyond the control of the film makers and the subsequent decisions of those reporting those events.

The military ban also potentially represents a turning point for director Robert Altman. Whilst there is evidence of Altman discussing the film as concerned with 'insanity', there is no evidence prior to the military ban of him discussing it as anti-war. This is not to argue that Altman was definitely not thinking about the film in this way prior to the ban, but to acknowledge that the ban, and the more general sense of the film as an anti-war statement represents an avenue by which the film could gain publicity that would otherwise not have been available. Regardless of precisely when Altman and the other people involved in making and marketing the film decided that it is best discussed as an anti-war film (acknowledging that this may always have been the intention), that this is such a key aspect of the response to the ban indicates that it was viewed as a useful marketing tool. That is, the anti-war position of the film is beginning to be discussed as a major aspect of its appeal, and this inherently requires that this position is seen as appealing to audiences.

Whilst the anti-war movement was growing in response to various events throughout the sixties and at the time of *M*A*S*H*'s release, actual opposition to the war remained a position that was far from universally adopted by the American public (Hahn, 1970). It is evident though in the connection that is perhaps consciously drawn between *M*A*S*H* and the anti-war movement that there is a perception that the 'anti-war' position (and all it entails) is innately marketable. This can be seen to extend to those audiences who do not explicitly identify themselves as, to use contemporary terminology, doves or hawks. This is because members of the anti-war movement and counterculture more generally (in as much as this could be seen as a unified movement) cannot be seen to represent a large enough audience for the film alone. As such, through the association of language more usually utilised in the counterculture context, Altman, and those marketing the film can be seen to be using the movement as a selling tool in itself. Effectively the engagement with the counterculture and the anti-war movement can at least partially be seen as a tool to attract the interest of

audiences outside of those groups. This posits the counterculture as interesting and alluring to people who were not actively engaged in anti-war politics, and did not identify themselves as counter-cultural, and clearly operates within a general sense of the counterculture as an effective selling tool. Thomas Frank argues that not only was this not without precedent, but that by 1970 it was becoming fully one of the most widespread cultural touch points used in advertising.

In the later years of the [sixties] ... youth and counterculture became the paramount symbols of this new sensibility in ads, hip became virtually hegemonic, almost extinguishing the older, square style altogether (Frank, 1998:133)

Frank also notes that during 1968-69, what he calls 'hip' advertising accounted for more than 70% of all adverts. The difference between this figure, and the potential amount of the American public who were actively engaged in the counterculture movement demonstrates the degree to which the movement was becoming commoditised. This is not the only indicator though, Frank also notes that "on most occasions counter-cultural references were strictly superficial, with little relation to the product" (Frank, 1998:134). Understood within this context the author of the article outlining the ban, and the film's director are actively positioning *M*A*S*H* as a counter-cultural product.

Advertising *M*A*S*H* – Stars

This sense of the film as a counterculture product relates back to the way it is presented in the press book advertising. However, whilst it is not possible to measure with complete accuracy, there is evidence to suggest that direct use of the press book adverts in newspapers is relatively limited. The larger full and half page adverts appear very rarely whilst the smaller two/three line adverts, which appear with more regularity are frequently altered to fit individual promoter's needs.

An advert for *M*A*S*H* appears in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette on Saturday 28th of March. This is the first advertisement for the film which appears in the paper, and in papers from the area, and it coincides with the start point of a run at the Fiesta Theatre. It is a relatively small advert, with the image of the legs, hand and helmet which appears in the press book advertising, and the quote "The best American war comedy since sound came in". The Sunday edition of the paper does not include any adverts for any films, but advertising for *M*A*S*H* appears again on the Monday. The Monday advert is in a slightly different format in terms of size and shape, but with the same quote and image. What is significant here though is that in close proximity to the advert is a large picture of Elliot Gould and Donald Sutherland investigating an x-ray. The photo is accompanied by a short amount of text which carries the title: "Wacky Surgeons". This text begins by naming the two actors, explaining their roles as medics in the film before listing the names of other actors, before ending "...*M*A*S*H*, which opens Wednesday at the Fiesta". That the image and text are associated with the Fiesta theatre demonstrates that for those advertising the film Donald Sutherland and Elliot Gould are seen as key elements of the promotion of *M*A*S*H*. The image is far larger than the advert for the film itself. Because this size difference has cost implications it is possible that advertisers perceived more value in presenting an image of Gould and Sutherland than a more traditional advert for the film. This might relate to Gould's previous film *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice*. This film, for which he was nominated for an academy award was one of the highest grossing films of 1969, and significantly it still was being exhibited in 1970. As such *M*A*S*H* shares advertising space with *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice*, which at this stage has been showing for around two months. It's "four academy award nominations" are a prominent part of its advertising, as is Gould himself.

Gould's star power as a selling point is perhaps best indicated in one of the simplest of the adverts which appears in late March. This advert consists of the *M*A*S*H* title logo, the quote "A cockeyed masterpiece" and the name "Elliot Gould". These three lines dominate with the only other text the theatre name and "colour by De Luxe" in less prominent type. Clearly the involvement of Gould is signalled as a major selling point. That the advert does not indicate anything about the role he plays also indicates that there is a basic understanding that the reader will know, for instance, that Gould is an actor as opposed to a director. Sutherland meanwhile had appeared in more films before *M*A*S*H* than Gould and whilst, with the exception perhaps of *The Dirty Dozen*, none had enjoyed the success of *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice*. The degree to which he is referenced indicates that he was also on his way to becoming both extremely well recognised and a selling point in his own right.

The use of Gould and Sutherland in the advertising for *M*A*S*H* serves to demonstrate the way in which star power operates within the advertising context. The advertising relies on an understanding within the prospective audience of who these people are, built upon exposure to their films, but also exposure to other texts which contribute to their star persona. Richard Dyer, in his work *Stars* (1998), dedicates a section to attempting to understand the multi-faceted nature of Jane Fonda's star persona. Here he argues that Fonda's image as a star, which is carefully separated from her as a person ("we are talking about a film star as a media text not as a real person" (Dyer, 1998:63)) is understood by those consuming it via associations with her father, her sex appeal, her acting ability, and finally her position on a number of political issues. Whilst this is viewed as a chronology by Dyer he makes it clear that these aspects rely heavily on each other and are intimately interrelated.

Particularly in terms of their political stance, the star images of Fonda, Sutherland and to a lesser extent Gould, can be seen as related. In 1972 Sutherland created and appeared together with Fonda in the *Free the Army Tour*, a highly politicised anti-Vietnam revue, which is later turned into a film. Even earlier than this they are linked by their appearance together in *Klute*. What is important though is that for Sutherland the political aspect of his star persona is unproblematic, whilst, as Dyer identifies, for Fonda it is highly incongruous with the other aspects which can be seen to make up her image. Alongside gender, this difference stems from the amount of time that Fonda's star image has had to develop in comparison with that of Sutherland, it is only because there has been time for her to be understood in a specific way that the development of a disparate star image may be problematic. Sutherland and Gould, as relatively 'new' stars in 1970 are understood quite specifically, and very unproblematically, as similar to their characters in the films they have featured in. Perhaps helpfully, these characters are relatively consistently similar across the projects they are involved with. The star images of both men at this point is of the "young hip Galahads" which the critics identify in the film, meaning that the use of their names to promote it is highly effective. They are not just recognisable names, they are recognisable as related to the type of film *M*A*S*H* is.

Advertising *M*A*S*H* – Patterns and Genres

Advertising for *M*A*S*H* across America follows similar patterns in most markets. This pattern begins with the opening date of the run being heavily advertised, this activity is frequently supported with reviews, either of a clearly promotional nature, or occasionally by named critics who seem to have less of a promotional agenda. This initial coverage is subsequently replaced by smaller less prominent adverts as other, newer, films are promoted more heavily. Occasionally, where one theatre runs the film after another the cycle is repeated. This however is often on a much smaller scale, the initial adverts are far less prominent and the move towards smaller less prominent

advert occurs much faster. Where the film is subsequently shown in very small theatres or drive-ins there is often almost no advertising aside from the brief theatre listings. This move from relatively high coverage of the film, to almost no coverage at all reflects the relative status of the establishments the film is playing in. The theatres which are showing the film first are frequently the first to show most pictures. *M*A*S*H*, as a successful film is often advertised as enjoying extended screening schedules and takes far longer to filter down to the smaller or drive-in theatres than some less successful films. Not only does this reveal something of the hierarchical nature of the distribution system in 1970, it also demonstrates the way in which the smaller theatres utilised the advertising of those 'above them' in the process, trading on the recognition the adverts of other theatres generated and thus spending less on advertising themselves.

For an example of the opaque nature of this hierarchical, trickle down advertising, it is possible to return to the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette and the Fiesta Theatre. The advert which appears on the 1st of April for the opening day of the film is, aside from the addition of the name of the theatre and the text "now showing", one of the few which is extremely similar to a number of the adverts which appear in the press book. With "*M*A*S*H* is the best American war comedy since sound came in" as the headline, all of the original quotes are reproduced, except for Crist's "Without a doubt the funniest service comedy I have ever seen". This is replaced with a quote from Vincent Canby "*M*A*S*H* is a fascinating film...full of style, emotion, reason and intelligence that define the work of living art" (Ellipses in original). This quote appeared in the New York Times on the 1st of February 1970, postdating the release of the film by over a month. Its inclusion demonstrates clearly that the press book was not viewed as a definitive marketing tool, but a starting point. Its alteration here, the replacing of one quote with another, suggests that those marketing the films were engaged with the discourse

surrounding the film. It is one of the clearest indicators that the advertising was tailored to gel with a perceived notion of how the film was being discussed. Because this change was made with the aim of promoting the film, it cannot be seen as an accurate reflection of a wider cultural attitude towards the film, only as an indicator of what those marketing the film felt would best sell it.

However there is a clear difference between a quote which foregrounds genre, here service comedy, and that which replaced it. Canby, in this context, presents the film in terms which posit it as far more intellectually grounded. Its reason, emotion and intelligence perhaps having more to do with its elevation to art than the genre of comedy. This quote does not appear again in any of the advertising for the films run at the Fiesta though. This again demonstrates that promoters were consistently altering their marketing materials. In subsequent days the adverts become smaller, two or three lines across one column. The image does not vary across these smaller adverts, the same hand topped with the helmet appears, however the *M*A*S*H* type logo is emblazoned across the bottom of the hand and the legs are entirely cut off by the bottom of the advert. This is in itself a decision which potentially reveals something about the choices theatre owners were making, and were perhaps forced to make when choosing how to market the film. We cannot know if this constitutes an active attempt to suppress the sexualised elements of the film within the advertising, or if it represents a desire to highlight what was felt to be the potentially more appealing aspects of the film. However the choice to crop the image, as opposed to reducing its size, entirely removes the sexualised aspect of it. It becomes, without the legs, an image with a far stronger relationship with the military. Arguably, with just the helmet to contextualise the 'v' sign is far more likely to be read as relating to the military – as a v for victory, or as a peace symbol.

Anti-War Satire - April 1970

The move both within the advertising, and within the rhetoric utilised by those who made the film, towards positioning it as a counterculture product should be considered primarily within the context of the UPI article which outlines the military ban. There is little evidence to suggest that the critical community was as open to understanding *M*A*S*H* as a product of the counterculture at this stage in the same, unqualified way that this article does. For instance, the beginning of April saw the Schenectady Gazette print a review by Louise Boyka which covers thematically similar ground to the reviews which immediately follow the release of *M*A*S*H* and is entirely devoid of anything that would explicitly indicate a perceived link to the counterculture. The focus is partially on the performance of the cast, but the real concern for Boyka is in the nature of the humour of *M*A*S*H*. Ultimately Boyka returns to the phrase “rockbottom zaniness”, and specifically ‘rockbottom’, as a way of describing this. The review opens with an explanation that “the thought of ... army surgeons making merry in every way, against a messy, bloody operating room decor, seemed terribly repulsive”. Boyka explains the extent to which the humour revolves around sex, innuendo and ribaldry. However, this humour is qualified though, allowed perhaps, in spite of its baseness. “...the humor is black...” evoking the “splash and gurgle of death in the operating room”. This image is purposefully graphic in that it makes the assertion that humour is “the only way [the protagonists] can survive such conditions” (Boyka, 1970), operate effectively for the reader.

Here then is a review which makes it very clear that there is a tension between the actions of the doctors, the space they inhabit, and their behaviour. That there is a ‘proper’ way in which those people in that position should behave. It is a tension which is apparent in the film itself, conveyed primarily through the character of Major Houlihan, who at one point asks how “a degenerated person like [Hawkeye] could have reached a position of responsibility in the Army Medical Corps?”. The response: “he was drafted” indicates succinctly that the character did not choose the position of

military doctor, and underlines the power of his behaviour in managing his responses to the actuality of that situation. The review never explicitly announces that the initial fear that the juxtaposition of the military hospital context and humour would be repulsive never materialised, but it carefully outlines an argument for the inclusion of the humour that is based within a philosophical understanding of the needs of those operating within that environment for an outlet. There is a sense then that the humour of *M*A*S*H* is still seen to some extent to fall ultimately into the category of that which is 'repulsive', however it is allowable because it exists in the service of a noble cause: the survival of the doctors.

Following in the latter part of April a review in *The Evening Independent* appears to be similarly concerned with the amount of blood in the film. The article carries the headline "Anti-war *M*A*S*H* is Bloody Good" and opens with the line "'M-A-S-H' is a bloody good show. That says it, really. It's bloody and it's good." (Wright, 1970). However, whilst the 'bloodiness' of the film can again be seen as a byword for the horrific environment of the military hospital, the relationship between this and humour is seen as far more than one of the depiction of a specific coping mechanism called into service in a situation that is difficult to deal with on a mental level. Here the reviewer Fred Wright builds a notion of the 'bloodiness' of the film as a fundamental aspect of its anti-war message. He calls it "one of the best anti-war films since *Dr. Strangelove*" (Wright, 1970). This is significant in that *Dr. Strangelove* was almost six years old at this point, and that *M*A*S*H*, by April, had already surpassed it in terms of box office takings. In evoking *Dr. Strangelove* over any number of more recent (and potentially popular) comedies Wright directly places *M*A*S*H* in the pantheon of political satire with an anti-war message. The sense that the anti-war aspects of the film take precedence for Wright over the comedy itself continues throughout the review: "Jokes may be cracked... But always, always, the doctors are doctors, attempting to save lives when engaged in their own brand of combat". The positioning of the film alongside Dr

Strangelove also indicates that the film is seen as more important because it is an anti-war satire as opposed to any other type of comedy. For Wright the anti-war aspect of the film arises from its satire, and this in turn arises from the juxtaposition of the humour of the protagonists in the face of the adversity and the horrific bodily consequences of war. First the temperament of the surgeons is explained “[j]okes may be cracked, crude remarks passed from doctor to nurse, even a song or two when the lights go out” (Wright, 1970). Then the graphic nature of the surgery scenes is discussed: “[e]ven shut eyes won’t save you from the sound of a bone saw during an amputation.” Taken together Wright posits that the film is about a different sort of war “the human skill for healing versus the human skill for maiming”. Unlike other reviewers Wright is far less concerned with the ways in which the protagonists treat those around them, whilst “an intimate love scene exposure via broadcast over the camps loudspeaker system” is mentioned, the victims, or the actions which lead to this point, are not. The film is seen as anti-war satire purely in terms of its ability to explicitly demonstrate the horrors of war being dealt with in a less than reverent way.

Whilst Time Magazine and The Reading Eagle both previously cited *M*A*S*H* as an anti-war film, the former does so almost in passing, whilst the latter draws the inference from outside of the text. Wright, for perhaps the first time, explores precisely what it is about *M*A*S*H* which allows this connection to be made. The nature of the film is discussed briefly at the beginning of the review, summarising the basic substance of a large proportion of the previous reviews in just a few words “*M*A*S*H* is literally hilarious, very irreverent, often obscene, totally frank and without parallel or simile” (Wright, 1970). This is, aside from the last few, an almost word for word reproduction of the second sentence of Vernon Scott’s review. It is similar also to Scott’s review in that this overview of the film is followed by an explanation of the way in which the film eschews the war tradition of having a clear and visible enemy and a story resolved on the battlefield. However the similarities largely end there, for then Wright evokes a

second staple of satire for comparison, *Catch 22*, the film adaptation of which, at this time, is two months away from general release. Whilst *Dr Strangelove* and *Catch 22* are both comedies their satire is widely accepted as serious socio/political commentary. By stating that “(*M*A*S*H*) brings to the screen now what *Catch 22* has been promising in its long journey from novel to film” Wright imbues *M*A*S*H* with *Catch 22*’s satirical credentials. As such, drawing these parallels serves to strengthen the claim that *M*A*S*H* is, if not an anti-war film, at least a film containing legitimate and effective satire of the war. As with some of the earlier reviews, relying on a sense of *Catch 22* as a benchmark by which to measure satire, placing it above other comedy films as one which has something important and relevant to say about contemporary society. That is, *Catch 22*, and *M*A*S*H* by association are seen as having a purpose beyond entertainment alone, and this is directly connected to their value.

There is potentially a difference between the very well defined and explored understanding of *M*A*S*H* as an anti-war film that Wright discusses here, and the inferred, hazier link with the counterculture that pervades in the advertising and the earlier reviews. Wright sees the film as making an important philosophical and culturally relevant point, which ultimately elevates the film to something other than simply entertainment. This is very different to the attitudes displayed in the earlier reviews and the marketing. Whilst these can be seen to make some similar connections these come through the rubric of the counterculture as a synecdoche for a more politically motivated anti-war movement. They can be seen as far more commercially minded and aesthetically based. Effectively, Wright explores a relatively well developed sense of the film’s philosophical position as an anti-war film based within a short, but effective, analysis of its content. Much of what precedes this review draws similar, but less developed, conclusions about the film based within a sense of it as engaging with the wider counterculture movement, primarily through the way it and the characters which inhabit it look and sound. The counterculture becomes a short cut to the type of

sentiment Wright describes, conveyed in a simple way using limited imagery and references, but recognisably imbuing the subject (*M*A*S*H*) with a sense of some sort of political stance.

The use of the counterculture as a selling tool both with *M*A*S*H* and in the wider product marketing context signals its commoditisation. However this has primarily occurred because of a perceived relationship with the more pressing issues of the Vietnam War, the anti-war movement and other important cultural shifts that were occurring throughout the sixties and seventies affecting perceptions of race and gender. The counterculture carries with it the gravitas of those movements and issues, but screens their potentially contentious reality behind a facade of easily identifiable aesthetic tropes. Initially at least, where *M*A*S*H* is discussed or understood as having a relationship with the counterculture, it is via these tropes that this occurs. It is not until the military ban is placed upon the film that exploration of it in these terms really goes beyond the aesthetic and begins to discuss the anti-war link.

The Ban Is Lifted – April 1970

*M*A*S*H* and its ban from military bases again makes it into the newspapers when the ban is lifted midway through April. This occurred either because the ban was having too little effect, with military personnel able to see the film anyway whilst on leave, or because as Altman himself prophesised, the publicity the ban was generating was having the effect of making more people want to see the movie. Potentially it was the result of a combination of the two. Gregory Macdonald (writing for the Boston Globe) briefly discusses the lifting of the ban. Most significantly, when explaining that the board which chose to ban the film is comprised of officers from various branches of the army, he also notes that “[n]o enlisted men were included in the screening” (Macdonald, 1970). Drawing attention to the exclusion of enlisted men carries the implication that had the screening included all ranks the outcome would have been

different. By extension the reason given for the ban, here “because it reflected unfavourably on the military” becomes either a subjective opinion which would not have extended down the ranks to all enlisted personnel, or, more presciently, becomes a truism, the danger of which would lay in its identification as such by the enlisted men. Because it is very specifically those who exercise higher levels of control within the military who ordered the ban and because that ban comprised an attempt to deny enlisted men the opportunity to see the film, Macdonald is potentially subtly indicating that the ban was in fact called for because the film reflects unfavourably on that higher end of military command. It is possible to identify this as a theme in the film itself with those in command making up the majority of the victims of enlisted men. Beyond this, the status of the protagonists as enlisted men (and their inherent position in the military hierarchy) is a key component of the humour of the film.

This description of the ban and its subsequent lifting should be understood in the context of the larger article which comes under the heading “rap-up” (Macdonald, 1970) (which is eclipsed by the larger headline “*M*A*S*H* wins ban then army relents”).

During the 60's and 70's the term “rapping” was used to describe rhetoric which was fluid in both subject matter and style and carries strong counterculture associations. In 1967 a Time piece discussing the new phenomenon of the hippy, defines the word as “achieving rapport with random talk” (Brown, 1967). The tone of the article is set by the opening sentence “[h]eres a column comprised of news reports which, taken together, should define your world” (Macdonald, 1970). As well as the story about *M*A*S*H* the article also, amongst other things, reports on a protest against sales tax, an insurance policy designed for those caught in possession of marijuana and the inclusion of the words “poster, campus and riot” in a new French dictionary. As such this article can be seen as self-consciously appealing to, and encompassing, many ongoing counterculture concerns. It potentially lacks the perceived gravity or meaning of the established counterculture press in that it reduces the movement to some of its most

recognisable, but potentially least significant components. The inclusion of the *M*A*S*H* story in this context is telling in that by April of 1970 it has become a readily identified aspect of the counterculture movement. Beyond this, because the article is not ostensibly a review or promotion there is no requirement to provide a description of the film in terms of genre or plot, and it is simply understood as an 'anti-war' film. This demonstrates that *M*A*S*H* has earned a certain degree of status within the counterculture space, and that within this space *M*A*S*H* is understood primarily as a film with a perceived anti-war message, rather than, for instance, as a comedy or war film.

The Cannes Film Festival Controversy – May 1970

In May of 1970 *M*A*S*H* won the Palme D'or at the Cannes Film Festival. The Palm Beach Post reported the win on the 17 May with the headline "*M*A*S*H* Wins at Cannes" (A.P, 1970). The article begins by describing *M*A*S*H* as "irreverent, sexy and anti-establishment". The bulk of the article is given over to listing the other winners at the competition. However the focus at the end of the article returns to *M*A*S*H* explaining, perhaps slightly confusingly given that the article appears in an American newspaper, that the film, "already a hit in the United States is so disrespectful of the American military establishment that it once was banned from U.S military bases" (A.P, 1970). The slightly detached nature of the article (referring to the film's reception in the United States) stems from the fact that it is a syndicated article from the French office of the Associated Press Agency. This then is an article which is written for an audience which comprises both Americans and those of other nationalities who arguably would be less familiar with the film. It then becomes more significant that the article concludes that "[a]side from the extremely fast pace of the screenplay, the international jury appeared to have been impressed by the audacity of such an attack". What is posited as the anti-establishment, specifically anti-military-establishment, content of the film is presented as one of the primary reasons behind the film's success at the festival. The

lack of respect towards the military establishment, reinforced by that institution's own acknowledgement of it (evidenced through the militaries banning of the movie), is directly tied to the decision of the judges. Beyond this, that the jury is noted explicitly to be made up of members of the international film community carries the implication that they themselves are in agreement with this way of viewing the US military. The article implies that this is a film that won because the sentiments that it displays in terms of the US military are accurate in the eyes of the rest of the world; so accurate in fact that the military felt that it needed to be banned.

The Boston Globe prints an article that originates from Reuters on the same day. Here *M*A*S*H* is described as a "[b]lack comedy" (Reuters, 1970) which "described the capers of three surgeons in an American field hospital for soldiers wounded on the Korean front". As with the Palm Beach Post article there is an overview of all of the winners of major prizes bisecting the discussion of *M*A*S*H*, before a final reference is made to the film, again referring to the views of the critics who awarded the prize: "critics saw the film as a satire on the US military and a light look at war". Though this article does not refer to the banning of the film it is again the military which is seen as the primary target of *M*A*S*H*'s satire and whilst any comment it makes on war itself is seen as light hearted.

Both of these articles very clearly connect the success of the film at the festival with the critic's view of it as occupying an anti-military position. These articles very explicitly view the military as the target here, as opposed to war in general. War is not referred to at all in the Associated Press article, and is seen as less significant ("light hearted") in the Reuters article. This is significant given that both papers print further stories about the Cannes Film Festival the following day that have a quite different focus. The second Palm Beach Post article carries the headline "Film Fete Ends in Controversy" (U.P.I., 1970). This article explains that the president of the Cannes jury boycotted the

awarding of the Palme D'or to *M*A*S*H* after the jury was split in its decision. Here, unlike the first article, *M*A*S*H* is cited as anti-war. This is lifted directly from the rhetoric of one of the jury members, Mrs Christine Gouze-Renal, who backed the boycott of the award. Gouze-Renal is reported to have felt that a film like *The Strawberry Statement* which deals “directly with the American Student protest movement” (U.P.I, 1970) would have been a more deserving winner, rather than giving the prize to “an anti-war film”. The Boston Globe article, also by the United Press Agency leads with the headline “Cannes Head Boycotts *M*A*S*H* Award” (U.P.I, 1970). It explains the position of the jury president, who is reported to have thought that *M*A*S*H* was a good film, but less deserving of the award than others in the festival. The same quotation from Gouze-Renal also appears again in this article. The inclusion of this quote in both articles potentially signals the prompt which lead to a shift in the terms used to describe the film at the beginning of the article. Here the film is referenced simply as an “US anti-war film”. This can be juxtaposed with the articles published just the day before which understand the film as anti-military. As such, whilst the earlier articles initially posit the irreverence of *M*A*S*H*, specifically towards the military, as a fundamental aspect of its appeal, perhaps even the main reason for its success, when its perceived anti-war stance becomes an issue at the festival this eclipses the understanding of it as “irreverent, sexy and anti-establishment” (A.P, 1970) or a “light look at war” (U.P.I, 1970).

The anonymous writers of the two articles published after the controversy became widely known can be seen to have been prompted by the feelings of someone closely associated with the industry - both articles note that Gouze-Renal is a film producer. What this represents though is not just a dramatic shift in the rhetoric used to discuss the film, but also a shift in its perceived focus. It is conceivable that had the president of the jury not chosen to boycott the film, and had Gouze-Renal not provided a narrative

to this action, which included a reading of the film as anti-war, that this shift would not have occurred at all.

A week later a further article indicates that this change has remained intact at least at the Boston Globe. In its arts section appears a piece which discusses *M*A*S*H*'s win, and also reviews some of the other films from the Cannes Film festival. This article, which is written by one of the paper's own correspondents, begins by explaining the controversy surrounding the decision to award *M*A*S*H* the Palme D'or. Whilst this section of the article is largely the same in terms of content to the earlier U.P.I article, here it is unsupported by direct quotations. It ends with the writer's assertion that the jurors who did not favour *M*A*S*H* felt that other films, in particular "*The Strawberry Statement*" (Kelly, 1970) were more politically relevant. Beyond this, that: "in the publicised process of their dissatisfaction it seems to me that Astaurias and Mme Gouze-Renal stubbornly denied the perhaps larger relevance of *M*A*S*H*'s nearly manic anti-war stance". The quote from Gouze-Renal upon which the second of both the Boston Globe and Palm Beach Post articles largely hinge would seem to predicate the belief that the judges were not of the opinion that *M*A*S*H* contained anti-war sentiments. However the argument here is slightly evolved from one which was concerned with "form and technique" (Kelly, 1970) and the (from Gouze-Renal) target of political statement to one concerned with the perceived strength of the political statement. In this argument *M*A*S*H* is seen as the rightful winner of the festival because the strength of its anti-war stance is seen as "nearly manic".

This evolution, from anti-military, to anti-war, with a focus on the Cannes win and controversy, appears to represent a relatively clear alteration to the discourse surrounding the film. However, the differences between these five before/after articles cannot be viewed on their own as evidence of a more widespread shift in attitudes towards the film. For instance Susan Jasper opens her article about *M*A*S*H* with the

headline “Cannes film winner, *M*A*S*H*, superb blend of tragi-comedy” (Jasper, 1970). Whilst this signals Jasper’s knowledge of the film’s performance at the festival, she does not refer to the controversy surrounding the win at any point. The article was published to coincide with the opening of the film at the Paramount theatre, so is potentially promotional, and may actively avoid mentioning the controversy surrounding it. The article draws in a number of aspects which have at this point become prominent in the discourse surrounding the film. It is compared to *Catch 22*, the protagonists are described as engaging in irreverent behaviour as a method by which to “survive war”, and it is noted that the operating scenes feature “enough blood to bring home the facts of war” (Jasper, 1970). Ring Lardner Jr’s time under the black list is again noted, but here it is stated that he “emerges to haunt his tormentors with a fine anti-war statement of the most oblique and obvious nature – war is bad”. This is understood as having an anti-war message that film which is seen to arise from the work of Lardner Jr. as screen writer directly. This message is perhaps understood as less significant because of its apparent obviousness. However, this lack of significance is also because the emphasis placed on the film’s more humanist message of the capacity for resilience and good in bad times, as signalled towards the end of the article. The article can be seen to represent the cumulative nature of the discourse surrounding the film. It draws upon aspects of the discourse that have at various points been dominant, and builds them into a coherent sense of what the film is about, and how it is to be understood. Whilst these aspects all function, and functioned as means of discussing the film in their own right, by this point in the year it is possible to see them as a far more tightly linked set of associations surrounding the film. Whilst the article still discusses the anti-war aspect of the *M*A*S*H* as separate from its humanist message, one does not preclude the other as it does in some of the earlier articles.

This sense of initial ways of discussing the film being slightly disparate, but then ultimately forming into a cohesive sense of the film is reflected in the use of quotes

throughout the later advertising for the film. From April onwards the advertising for the film in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, which utilises the smaller version of the original image (discussed earlier) is accompanied by a rotating set of quotes from early reviews or the press book (aside from one instance of "ladies day tomorrow"). On April 6th the quote is "*M*A*S*H* is what the new freedom of the screen is all about, on the 8th "*M*A*S*H* is a cockeyed masterpiece, see it twice". The quote "best American war comedy since sound came in" is used again on the Friday when a larger advert appears with the full legs, hand, helmet image and the tag "2nd Hilarious Week" whilst "*M*A*S*H* is what the new freedom of the screen is all about" appears once again after this. After this cyclical phase all of the subsequent smaller two or three line adverts use a quote which appears nowhere in the press book: "*M*A*S*H* is one of the funniest movies ever made". The advertising again moves into a cycle, for nine weeks the larger full image advert appears announcing the number of weeks the film has been showing, whilst the interim weekdays see the smaller adverts appear always with the same "funniest movies" quote. Advertising for *M*A*S*H* at the Fiesta theatre begins to count down how many days the film will continue to be shown for from June 10th with the same two or three line advert including the tag "last 7 days" with the final advert for the Fiesta run appearing on June 15th stating "last four days". The films two and a half month run at the Fiesta demonstrates that after an initial flurry of larger adverts using a number of different formats and designs a significant proportion of the run is advertised with very little change to the advertising at all, with the same designs repeated throughout on a cyclical basis.

After its run at the Pittsburgh Fiesta *M*A*S*H* is shown at a number of other theatres in the area. These theatres advertise less frequently than the Fiesta. The Fulton Mini places small two or three line adverts similar to those of the Fiesta but without the hand/helmet image - choosing to rely on the *M*A*S*H* type logo and the "Funniest movie ever made" quote. This not only suggests that the logo alone has become seen

as a recognisable marker of the film, but also is a contrast to the move within the critical community towards a downplaying of the comedy of the film, in favour of a focus on its anti-war position. A number of the larger adverts which appear throughout the film's run at the Fulton Mini feature the words "don't miss *M*A*S*H*" one atop the other. The 'o' the 'l' and the 'A' of the three words are replaced with the legs/hand/helmet image. Though the legs do form the rudimentary shape of a capital A (and thus correctly spelling the word *M*A*S*H*) it is arguably as much the image itself and the typeface of the advert that immediately identifies the advert as referring to the film. This again indicates that the advertiser is sufficiently confident at this stage that the intended reader will have enough knowledge of the film to understand the aim of the advert. As the advertising continues throughout July and into August the "See *M*A*S*H* Now" adverts are interspersed with similarly sized adverts which read "*M*A*S*H* is a *SM*A*S*H*. Now continues record run downtown. 5 Hilarious Months." As these adverts begin to feature less quotes and images they rely far more heavily on the name of the film in isolation. These two adverts indicate that the promoters and theatres are relatively confident that readers will have already have had some knowledge of the film at least in terms of its genre, so quotes explaining how funny the film is, which initially served as a signifier of this become unnecessary. As with the Fiesta the run at the Fulton Mini is brought to a close with smaller adverts counting down to the last day. Beyond these two primary exhibitors *M*A*S*H* appears at the beginning of October as midnight programming, which slowly phases out by 19 October, beyond which no advertising for the film appears at all.

The advertising for *M*A*S*H* which appears in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette demonstrates that whilst the approaches of different exhibitors are relatively similar the duration of the time from when the film is released is a major contributing factor in how the film is advertised. Initially advertising uses star power, is high impact and is quite

explicit in the way it indicates genre. Later, as the advertising becomes less prominent in comparison with films which were subsequently released the focus shifts slightly. Genre is still important but quotes are now used more to explain how good the film is. Finally, as the run is ending the film and the brand is deemed to have become ubiquitous enough that it is assumed that a reader will already have knowledge of it, even if they have not yet seen it. Quotes which initially were used to explain the film give way to explanations of how long the film has been shown for - the mark of quality now comes not from the critics but is implied in the fact that it has retained audiences for as long as it has.

Returning to *M*A*S*H* - June – August 1970

Louise Boyka reviews *M*A*S*H* for a second time for the Schenectady Gazette, to coincide with the film opening at a local theatre. Taken as a whole the review is thematically developed from the one printed in the same paper in April. Again, “zaniness” of the film (Boyka, 1970) is emphasised. However the focus is quite different from the first. There is no repeat of the explanation of how “rockbottom” the humour is, nor the use of relatively graphic language to convey the bloodiness of the film. It is an argument concerned with convincing those who have previously dismissed the film because of concerns about “jokes amidst bloody army surgery” that they should in fact see it. That “rockbottom” humour is now referred to as “the zaniest, blackest humor”. Perhaps the most telling difference is that here Boyka argues that “there’s a thread underneath that shows through, as the only way intelligent human beings can survive the ridiculous waste of war and retain sanity” (Boyka, 1970). This is a sentiment which appears to some extent in the original review (“the only way they can survive such conditions”) but here the concept is far more concrete. We cannot know whether Boyka read any of the other reviews and articles about the film in the interim three months but in her assertion that “the tumult refuses to die down and everybody is talking more and more about *M*A*S*H*”, is the implication that she is aware of the events surrounding

the film. As such the difference between Boyka's original review of the film, and the one printed after the Cannes Film Festival can be seen as representative of the change in the way the film was perceived. Boyka was not one of the reviewers who saw the film as anti-war after its military ban in March and she does not go as far as to label it as such after the Cannes controversy. However the terms in which the film is discussed change. Where originally the film was funny (and enjoyable) in spite of what were perceived to be graphic surgery scenes and low humour, these things are presented after Cannes as integral to the operation of the film through their depiction of "the ridiculous waste of war" and "the only way intelligent human beings can survive" (Boyka, 1970) that waste.

Boyka is careful to highlight that she viewed the film a second time to write the review, potentially signalling awareness that there may be readers who had read the first iteration. Alongside this is the unusual proclamation, made ostensibly in relation to the degree of blood in the film that "I waited quite a while before I could bring myself to go through such torture and after all I get paid for it" (Boyka, 1970). Throughout all of the reviews this research calls upon, this is the only acknowledgement that film criticism is a job, with financial remuneration attached. Both of Boyka's reviews were written in response to the film being shown in local theatres. In the first review the assertion that the film will be showing for "a few more weeks, according to manager Dave Weinstein." (Boyka, 1970) and the close proximity of promotional imagery suggests that it appears as part of a promotional campaign. The second is less obviously promotional, however the name of a different theatre is included. As promotional material though the change in tone between the two reviews is perhaps more significant. As the sense of the film as having something significant to say about war, or the conditions of war, has been integrated into the promotional notion of the film it becomes possible to identify this as a perceived aspect of its popularity which can be utilised as a selling point which was not visibly leveraged when the film is first released.

By August of 1970 newspaper coverage of *M*A*S*H* is limited to brief descriptions of the film, advertising short runs and single showings in local theatres and drive-ins. Although these pieces are extremely short, it is the nature of these articles that they seek to represent the film as fully as possible with very few words. As such they can be seen to serve to partially demonstrate the prevailing dominant understanding of the film. One example reads: “*M*A*S*H*, war comedy about people coping with the horror of combat” (The Post Star, 1970). This, thematically, is ultimately extremely similar to Boyka's longer review. The rhetoric surrounding the genre of the film has been reduced to “war comedy” (The Post Star, 1970) whilst the focus of the film here is given as the ways in which the protagonists cope with war. This is clearest when juxtaposed with examples which appear in a similar context from earlier in the year: “Believe it or not, a good cast squeezes comedy out of blood-soaked hospital tents and amputations in Korean war. Combat doctors and nurses don't have much regard for army rules” and “*M*A*S*H* is what the new freedom of the screen is all about. Don't miss Hollywood's finest satirical comedy”. There is a clear difference between the earlier advertising reviews foregrounding the comedy of the film and the later introduction of the concept of “people coping with the horror of combat”. As such these small texts, as material generated purely to advertise the films can be seen as some of the clearest evidence of the change which occurs in the discourse surrounding *M*A*S*H* throughout the 1970s.

Whilst comparison of Boyka's review from relatively soon after the film is released with one published much later in the year reveals a subtle shift in the perceived purpose of the film, the short listings can be seen as a far more concrete example of this. Beyond this they indicate the perceived selling power of this way of understanding the film. The key selling point shifts from comedy, and a focus on the mischievous attitude of the combat doctors and nurses, to a far more humanist focus on the struggle to cope with war. The purpose of highlighting this is not just to posit that such a shift occurred in

response to events beyond the control of those making and marketing the film, but to argue that those people, and the audience, took that shift and perpetuated it. As demonstrated earlier in the chapter, in the advertising there appears to be a good degree of week on week control over the advertising material that theatres were placing in newspapers throughout 1970. As such, the text of the short listings can be seen to represent what was perceived by those marketing *M*A*S*H* to be the understanding of the film which would generate the largest audience. That is, because we know *M*A*S*H* was financially successful, these short descriptions perhaps owe as much to audiences embracing this way of understanding the film as they do to the events which led to their conception. The army ban, and the controversy at Cannes could have arguably had no lasting impact at all on the discourse surrounding the film had it not been taken and perpetuated not only by those writing about the film, but also those consuming it.

Recent examples

Without contemporary evidence, such as archival material from a studio, unpicking a film's journey to the screen is a difficult prospect. With *M*A*S*H* though there is the added complexity in that this journey has become an aspect of the mythology surrounding the film. This is the reason that discussion of it appears here, late in the chronology of the chapter, rather than at its very beginning. Two sources, Peter Biskind's *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls*, and an AMC produced documentary, *Backstory*, purport to give some idea of the process. They explain how screen writer Ring Lardner, Jr. went with the novel of *M*A*S*H* to producer Ingo Preminger, who in turn took the project to Richard Zanuck at Fox Studios. Biskind notes that the film had been offered to a number of other film directors, all of whom had turned it down before it was offered to Altman. Altman accepted the deal, a relatively low \$75000 to direct, but with the opportunity to choose his own team, and to shoot the film away from Fox's lot.

It is, on the surface, the relatively straightforward story of how the low profile, and low budget film came to find a director. However there are a number of key aspects which are singled out as of note. The fact that screen writer Ring Lardner, Jr. had been subject to the Hollywood black list is noted both by Biskind and the *Backstory* documentary. Though it is not explicitly stated in either of those contexts, the black list not only carried with it certain political associations, but also can be seen to indicate that Preminger and Zanuck were forward thinking, potentially rebellious characters, in employing Lardner. Likewise, the way in which the script is turned down by fifteen other directors is noted almost as a positive. Altman's eventual involvement, given the success of the film, is framed as a visionary act, and his insistence on choosing his own team is even more explicitly framed as a desire to work within his own vision, rather than that set out by the studio: "[Doc Merman] won't let me make the picture the way I want to make it. I've gotta pick my own cameraman, I need my own art director..." (Biskind, 1999:95). All of these things come together to give a sense of the film, and the film makers as mavericks, outsiders and rebels. The story continues to focus on Altman as it covers issues that arose throughout production, with tales of Sutherland and Gould's concern over the direction of the picture, parties on set and a heavy stress on the improvised nature of the dialogue. This leads to a post-production that sees the heads of the Fox studio disliking the film, screen writer Ring Lardner, Jr. effectively disowning the film because it strayed so far from his original dialogue, and even arguments in the editing suite, some of which are purported to have been integrated into the film as PA announcements.

The language used to describe the film makers and the film making process, as well as the specific aspects of that process which are focussed upon in both of these sources clearly posits the project as a whole as a different, forward thinking production, outside of the traditional Hollywood system, led by rebels and 'outside of the box' thinkers. As such it aligns well with a number of the trade story genres Caldwell conceives of in his

work *Production Culture* (2008). The making of *M*A*S*H*, particularly with Altman as a relatively unknown director can be seen as an example of the “genesis myth” (Caldwell. 2008:38), something that is consistently reinforced as academics refer to what are understood as highly innovative and unique stylistic innovations, such as the use of long lenses and overlapping dialogue. However, in this story Hollywood itself is represented as an enduring part of the establishment, populated by older, male patriarchs, who are eventually undermined by the film and the younger film makers, not only in that it is made, but because it is a success. This genre, the “against all odds” story, for Caldwell, is the domain of those involved in the film making process ‘below the line’, rather than directors. Altman’s story about himself serves then as an example of how this type of trade story can also mark the transitory point in the career of the director, as Altman ‘makes it’ not only as a director, but also in that he literally makes the film.

Clearly, when it is understood as a story Altman or the studio is telling about himself this narrative is not straightforward. The way in which the project was rejected by other directors is downplayed in favour of positing Altman as the only one who could see the potential in the screenplay. The reasons behind the multiple rejections are not given though, and it is likely that it was as much about finance and the relatively low budget (and low director’s salary) as any artistic considerations. Hal Erickson notes that whilst Gould and Sutherland are understood as temporarily misunderstanding the vision of Altman’s direction style, there could in fact have been far more deep seated concerns than this: “Elliot Gould and Donald Sutherland tried to have Altman removed from the picture, their official complaint being that although he would never give them any direction, he would mercilessly tear them down ... if they didn’t perform to his satisfaction ... Though Gould eventually reconciled with Altman ... Sutherland never worked with the director again” (Erickson, 2012:353). Finally, Ring Lardner Jr’s personal history with the House Un-American Activities Committee, prison sentence

and subsequent black listing carries with it a subtext of anti-establishment sentiment. If Lardner had written *M*A*S*H* with this in mind there is no evidence that he stood by the sentiment. The film was made a full five years after his first post-black list screen writing credit (with Terry Southern for *The Cincinnati Kid*) and Lardner, by many accounts completely disowned the picture after its release, a move only complicated further by his acceptance of an Oscar for best screenplay adaptation in 1971 (Bapis, 2008:118).

What is in question is the extent to which any of these ways of discussing *M*A*S*H* would have been seen as relevant had it not have been a success, or if it had not come to have been viewed as having some sort of counterculture, or anti-establishment message. Returning to Caldwell's concept of trade stories, it becomes clear that Altman, or anyone else involved with the film is only in the position to tell these stories in this way because the film was a success. In effect, the development of a mythology around the director (and the actors and screen writer) increases what Caldwell refers to as "[p]rofessional legitimacy and accumulation of career capital" (Caldwell. 2008:38).

Whilst for Altman the benefit is a clear reaffirmation of his prowess as a director (leading to further work) for the studio as a business the benefit is slightly more opaque. However, by allowing these stories to propagate, even if some of them are ostensibly negative about the studio, the film gains exposure and its longer term reputation is ensured. One of the key aspects of the role of trade stories in marketing that Caldwell refers to is the development of the DVD and its ability to deliver additional content. In this respect the stories which have evolved around *M*A*S*H*, and those who made it, particularly the *Backstory* documentary which appears on a number of DVD editions of the film, occupy an interesting position wherein they have their roots in quotes and newspaper articles which appeared in 1970, but that are still evolving and have a use in contemporary marketing.

Whilst they present their narratives without hesitation, the *Backstory* documentary and *Easy Riders Raging Bulls* do not represent conclusive facts about *M*A*S*H* or the making of *M*A*S*H*, and carry with them the vested interests of the film makers and studio in their propagation. They were made and written well after the release of the film, referring back to events that occurred both before and during its making. Whilst they are chronologically some of the most recent sources to which the work refers, they are interesting in that they refer to one of the earliest points in its timeline. This temporal leap is the primary source of a larger issue in the ways in which the film, the film makers, and the film making process are understood by contemporary audiences. The possibility remains that these sources do not accurately represent the contemporary realities of the things they purport to represent.

Easy Riders, Raging Bulls and the *Backstory* documentary could have served as a useful starting point in that they provide some context around the release of *M*A*S*H*. However, they are far more useful here, later in the chronology, in that they demonstrate both the value of, and some issues that arise from the primary sources that informed this chapter. These sources are all reviews and articles which refer directly to *M*A*S*H*, or events which affect that film which are contemporary to it. They can be seen to alter dramatically in response to those events, and often in response to each other. Significantly though, these events are contemporary to those sources, that is, the sources refer explicitly to the time they are written. The authors of these sources are conveying their opinions about the film and events that surround it directly, rather than of memories of those events. This is not to argue that these sources are somehow more accurate, or factual than Biskind's or the *Backstory* narratives, they still represent, fundamentally, constructed and mediated opinions, but to argue that they are not as far removed from the things which inform them as some more recent work potentially is. Effectively, all sources can be seen as products of the environment in which they were authored, so whilst *Backstory* and *Easy Riders Raging Bulls* can be seen as products

of an environment, which for a number of related reasons, encourages embellishment, promotion and storytelling over accuracy, when they are considered in that context they become especially useful. Moreover, they can be seen as a product of the discourse which precedes them. To remove them from that context, here, would be to remove them from their place in the chronology.

This is brought into focus by the sole piece of footage included in the *Backstory* documentary which originates from the time the film was shot. In the footage Altman is seen talking to an unidentified member of the film crew. He states: "It is becoming increasingly clear to me that this film is, um, about, (pause) insanity" (*Backstory: M*A*S*H*, 2000). This is an assertion that, especially with the pause for thought, reads as a moment of realisation for a director who is still working through the philosophical position of the work. For those who are aware of *Catch 22* the phrase could tenuously be seen to relate to the sort of existential struggle Yossarian engages with. However, it can only truly be understood in this way within a context which relates those two films. It is more tenuous still to view the moment as the kernel of a relationship between the film and an anti-establishment, rebellious, or even anti-war stance. Yet in the context of the *Backstory* documentary the footage appears to become evidence, made stronger by its status as contemporary to the making of the film, of Altman's understanding of the position of the film he is making. It can only function as such because it is located within the context of the *Backstory* documentary, and is dependent on the position of the documentary itself within the wider discourse surrounding *M*A*S*H*. Had a propensity towards discussing *M*A*S*H* as an anti-war film not developed during 1970/71 it seems unlikely that the documentary would frame Altman's sense of the film in the way that it does.

Critical Responses and Genre Categorisations

The existing academic work on *M*A*S*H* reviewed in the introduction to this work demonstrated a tendency towards framing analysis of the film through an understanding of it as an anti-war film, or as having a strong connection with the counterculture. In effect this has become the most widely accepted genre categorisation of the film. It is one that carries with it a heightened sense of political or social purpose, a sense that the film has a purpose beyond entertainment alone. This way of understanding the film has been steadily reinforced by repetition, both within academia and within the wider critical community, and by the length of time that it has persisted. It has been shown here that there is evidence that this way of understanding the film can be traced to the reactions of critics, writers, and others contemporary to the film as well as to events that relate to it and them. Evidence of these reactions has been found primarily in secondary sources (reviews and newspaper articles) and the reporting of the events they concern. It is also discernible in material generated by those marketing the film and the ongoing discussion surrounding it.

Discussing *M*A*S*H* as an anti-war film, particularly in the research or academic context becomes problematic because sources from early in 1970 show that the film was initially understood in quite different terms to those evident in the reviews and articles which discuss the film from later in the year. Articles and reviews published after the film has been banned by the military, and the controversy surrounding its win at the Cannes Film Festival are very different to the initial reviews of *M*A*S*H*. It has been shown that whilst these earlier reviews do posit the film as perhaps being critical of the military, they were primarily concerned with discussing the comedy of the film, discussing its operation as a means of assessing its success. The film's key purpose is seen to be to make the audience laugh, and these reviews address the film's ability to do this. There is in these early reviews some understanding of the film as potentially comprising, or part of, some sort of social commentary, however this is not fully

explored or resolved and it is certainly not seen as a key aspect of the film's popularity or success.

The reporting of the film's ban by the military review board serves, to some extent, to solidify, or distil, this notional concept of social commentary into a perceived anti-military message, and perhaps an anti-war one. This occurs largely because the articles reporting the ban and its eventual lifting do not rely on aspects of the film itself to draw this conclusion, but on the implication that the film is anti-military because it was identified as such by the military itself. The move towards an understanding of the film as an anti-war statement is significantly strengthened by the rhetoric of the responses to the film of some of the key judges sitting on the panel at the Cannes Film Festival. After Cannes, reviewers begin to apply the anti-war label to the film far more frequently, and provide stronger justification for that application with elements identified within the text itself. Later still in 1970 and beyond, this heightened degree of justification begins to drop away - the film is discussed as an anti-war film with absolute conviction. By the end of the year the discourse would suggest that *M*A*S*H* simply is an anti-war film, rather than a comedy film, a comedy film with an anti-military stance or any of the other iterations discernible within the discourse. The popularity of the film means that it was exhibited for most of the year and whilst less is written about it towards 1971, the smaller pieces designed to advertise the film in the latter part of the year serve as the strongest juxtaposition to those from the former, reflecting the stark change in the writing of those discussing the film.

Persisting largely unchanged since it was established, the current dominant understanding of the film can be seen to arise out of reviews and articles published late in 1970. It builds upon the discourse that begins in that year, and also the established mythology surrounding the making of the film and the intentions of those making the film. That there is evidence to suggest that rather than reflecting the actual intentions of

the film makers, this may have developed as a response, and catalyst to the films popularity is a further demonstration of the problematic nature of this particular dominant understanding, and of the notion of dominant understandings in general.

In spite of the confidence with which the assertion that *M*A*S*H* was understood as a counter-cultural text by its contemporary audience is presented, this can be seen to arise not from the film itself, but out of a complex set of circumstances surrounding it. By tracking the development of writing about *M*A*S*H* in the newspapers throughout 1970, and the ongoing discourse in other contexts, this research serves as a demonstration of the extent to which there is an increase in the film being written about in an anti-war text. It also it allows the events that contribute to this tendency to be located within that history. That there is a demonstrable change in the language and focus of the reviews and articles suggests that the meaning of *M*A*S*H* was being mediated throughout this period, and demonstrates that the way in which it was understood changed in response to events ancillary to the film. Ultimately, the current dominant understanding of the film arose from responses to these events.

Fundamentally, this questions the extent to which films should be understood to have stable meanings. The writing about *M*A*S*H* reveals the development of a dominant way of understanding of the film in a relatively linear and measurable fashion. It is possible to discern relatively clear cause and effect narratives in the responses of the critical community to specific events within the discourse surrounding the film. In discerning these responses the work effectively demonstrates that the ways in which the film has been, and is understood are not an inherent part the text itself. One of the primary ramifications of this is that the same may or may not be the case for many or all other films. They could, like *M*A*S*H*, be consistently approached from within the rubric of the current dominant understanding and as such be subjected to analysis which is reductive and unhelpful. Therefore, a key argument here is that a far more

useful approach may be to seek not to ask how a film fits in one or another category, and to subsequently analyse it as part of that category, but for the analysis to be concerned with how it came to be understood in this way.

Chapter Two: *Kelly's Heroes*

Donald Sutherland Plays Army Hippie in 'New-Type' War Movie (The Calgary Herald, 1970:27)

*M*A*S*H* was shown extensively at a number of theatres which used the Calgary Herald theatre guide to advertise throughout 1970. By September of 1970 *Kelly's Heroes* also begins to appear in the guide. In the listing for the first run of that film Sutherland's name appears amongst those of his other cast members as "Donald "*M*A*S*H*" Sutherland". Also listed are Clint Eastwood, Telly Savalas and "Ron Rickles (sic)", all without any such addition to their names. Whilst this is utilisation of the star power of Sutherland, twinned with the popularity of a recent film is not unusual, that the advertising places the title of the film in the centre of Sutherland's name suggests that he has become at this point especially cognate with *M*A*S*H*. Whilst they were arguably as, or even more recognisable to contemporary audiences none of the other actors are presented as associated with any previous work. This could indicate that they have been deemed sufficiently recognisable without such qualification, but perhaps more likely is that *M*A*S*H* is seen as thematically similar to *Kelly's Heroes*, and that Sutherland was seen as a major aspect of those linking themes. Whilst this perceived thematic connection between *M*A*S*H* and *Kelly's Heroes* is one which has endured to some extent in recent academia, during the 1970s, as is the case in the Calgary Herald, it was far more frequently Sutherland himself who became the site of the link between the two films. Rather than this being a case of contemporary critics and writers noting that he had starred in two subsequent films, it potentially is an indicator of the perceived power of the cultural associations Sutherland was carrying with him at the time. The relationship between *M*A*S*H*, *Kelly's Heroes*, and Sutherland is addressed in this chapter, which asks how cultural associations relate to genre, the ways in which this can be seen to alter the discourse surrounding the films, and perhaps more significantly, exactly how these things operate to affect that change.

This chapter builds on notions of decentralised and shifting genres which were explored in the first chapter. Whilst the first chapter asked whether it is possible to track how the way in which a film has been understood has changed, this chapter is as much focussed on why these changes might occur. The changes which occur in the critical discourse concerning *Kelly's Heroes* can be seen to be to some extent less easily identified than with *M*A*S*H*. This is partially because discussion of the film can be seen to be defined by an on-going lack of consensus with regard to genre.

Consequently, whilst reinforcing the original conception of fluctuating genre this chapter also calls into question notions such as the purpose of genre, the value associated with particular genres, and the consequences of genre classifications. Ultimately it is argued here that genres are used by both those who make/market films and the critical community, who discuss, sell and attempt to make sense of them. Close examination of the ways in which genre informs the sources drawn upon here reveals it to be an intensely multi-faceted and extremely culturally specific process. These are notions that belie genres apparent simplicity and seemingly universal usage. It is primarily out of this cultural specificity that changes and differences in perceptions of genre occur. Notions of genre are heavily dependent on ones place within the cultural milieu and shared discussions concerning genre rely on shared frameworks and contexts, be these temporal, spatial, or based within more ethereal notions such as societal attitudes to gender.

In spite of the interesting and complex discourse surrounding *Kelly's Heroes* it is referenced relatively infrequently in recent academia. When it is discussed, it is in some vastly differing contexts. As with *M*A*S*H*, and *Catch 22*, where discussion is primarily (and problematically) limited to relatively few research contexts, *Kelly's Heroes* is frequently discussed in work focussing on genre, ranging from studies of Teen Films (Strong, 2008:48) to War films (Neale, 2006:28). Whilst this range

encompasses a far wider set of genres than work which studies *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22*, it is problematic that these studies tend to discuss the film as if the genre which is relevant to the particular area of interest is the sole genre category the film can be understood as falling within. For instance Strong categorises *Kelly's Heroes* as a "team film" (Strong, 2008:48) whilst Neale's potentially similar understanding of the characters as a "dirty group" arises out of a sense that the film undermines "conventionally selfless motives" (Neale, 2006:28), placing the film firmly within an (albeit subverted) combat framework. Even those studies which do understand *Kelly's Heroes* as demonstrating a degree of genre hybridity often only do so to argue that it is in fact more one genre than another. Finally those academics that do make clear genre categorisations often go on to undermine these as they discuss the film. Frequently this arises with the Oddball character. For instance, Strong's argument that the film reflects "growing disenchantment with the Vietnam War" through the way in which the Oddball character "anachronistically skews the diegetic world away from period realism and into comic resonance with the era of its production" (Strong, 2008:48), has almost nothing to do with his understanding of it as a team film, but does place it within the realm of the counter cultural, or anti-Vietnam War film.

Kelly's Heroes demonstrates a degree of genre hybridity, and can be seen to subvert some of the conventions that would allow it to be easily categorised within a single genre. As a consequence the issue of categorisation becomes so problematic that it can be seen to have effectively become the centre of the academic discussion surrounding the film – if not explicitly, at least evident in the centrality of genre to such a large percentage of academic work completed on the film. Regardless of the diversity of the genres that are focused on, that genre categorisation so frequently forms a significant part of the discussion signals the extent to which genre is used to inform and direct the study of the film. It is equally evident that within this apparent need to categorise there is a lack of consensus as to where this film sits within the genre

spectrum. One consequence of this is the presence of the type of genre related addendum to the main work that is evident in the work of Strong discussed above, or discussions of the extent to which the film conforms to one genre or another with little acknowledgement of its hybridity.

The research presented here investigates the extent to which this lack of consensus when it comes to genre is limited to the academic context, arguing that it potentially has roots in the both the output of the critical community, and in the utterances of those who made and marketed the film. Analysis of the ways in which the diverse range of responses to genre in *Kelly's Heroes* manifest serves to demonstrate that the film has no absolute intrinsic genre. Beyond this, to assume that it does, to study it within that assumption, or to make the aim of the work to argue for the film's inclusion in one genre category or another is potentially reductive. This work also investigates the relationship between genres and how successful the film is perceived to be. This is a relationship that is perhaps especially complicated with a film such as *Kelly's Heroes*, which can be seen to actively subvert and play with genre conventions. This relates back to the notion of dominant understandings discussed in the introduction to this work and the previous chapter, with *Kelly's Heroes* serving as an example of a text that has been interpreted in a number of differing ways, especially when it comes to genre. Because genre is so often the lynchpin in the development of a dominant understanding of a text, effectively, the diverse range of responses to this aspect of *Kelly's Heroes* meant that soon after its release it may have been far better equipped to avoid being understood through one particular rubric, or discussed in one particular way. However, later, changes which occurred both culturally and with regard to those marketing the film mean that contexts which allowed the film to be understood far more clearly as of a particular genre began to arise.

Press screenings for *Kelly's Heroes* began around 21 June 1970 before an exclusive run at the Pacific Hollywood Theatre beginning on 8 July (Nutman, 2011:5). The director, Brian G. Hutton and leader of the ensemble cast, actor Clint Eastwood, had previously worked together on the film *Where Eagles Dare*. Like *Kelly's Heroes* this was financed and distributed by MGM. As *Kelly's Heroes* was shot almost exclusively on location in Yugoslavia it was relatively inexpensive to make. The initial box office release yielded just over five and a quarter million dollars (Nutman, 2001:5) in rentals against a budget of around four million dollars (Hughes, 2009:194). This put the film into profit, but still meant that the film took around two million less domestically than *Where Eagles Dare*, the relative success of which some reviewers have argued MGM was attempting to emulate (Drew, 1970:09). *Kelly's Heroes* was sold extensively in overseas markets. Here, in comparison with the domestic market the film performed relatively well. Nutman suggests that whilst the critical responses to the film were universally mixed regardless of territory, it was eventually favoured by European audiences to a far larger extent than US audiences (Nutman, 2011:5). In so far as it is possible to measure popularity by comparing sales of video, DVD and Blu-Ray, as well as television scheduling, it is possible to argue that since its release the film has steadily gained, or, in some respects, maintained a relatively stable level of popularity. Whilst there are no solid figures for sales of the films after the box office there are certainly many more Video, DVD and Blu-Ray re-releases, special editions and re-masters of *Kelly's Heroes* available in comparison with *Catch 22*³ and *M*A*S*H*, anecdotally suggesting that sales of these items must be relatively profitable. In 2011

³ Amazon.co.uk lists 7 Blu-ray and DVD releases for *Catch 22*, 9 for *M*A*S*H* and 12 for *Kelly's Heroes*. This total does not include inclusions in boxed sets or collections, of which *Kelly's Heroes* is included in many, largely 'War' Collections or 'Clint Eastwood' Collections. This also acknowledges that there are potentially many other reasons for this difference, for instance, the relative costs of licensing the three films.

Cinema Retro magazine issued a special edition devoted in its entirety to *Kelly's Heroes*, which if not indicative of its absolute popularity, is almost certainly evidence of some degree of esteem, or perhaps cult following. In view of the focus on genre in the following discussion it is worthwhile noting here that this popularity, which can be understood as occurring far later after the film's release than that of *M*A*S*H*, is potentially the result of the film coming to be understood as being more solidly aligned with one particular genre. This work suggests that the role of the Oddball character and his men, frequently understood as the basis of a relationship between the film and the counterculture, complicates this process, introducing a lack of consensus with regard to the film's genre and potentially having a damaging effect on its success. This is discussed in far greater depth towards the end of the chapter. However, one potential manifestation of this is the film's inclusion in Channel Four's *100 Greatest War Films of All Time*, a very clearly genre delimited list. This is also tied to some relatively transparent processes like the rising fame of Clint Eastwood. Within these processes there are also some other cultural shifts occurring such as changes in attitudes to masculinity, the military, and the perceived 'role' of the war film.

'Traditional' Genres

Because so much of what is written about *Kelly's Heroes* is based within notions of the extent to which it can or cannot be seen to conform to the expectations associated with a given genre, most frequently, the 'traditional war film' and 'comedy', it is useful to discuss what exactly is meant by those terms. The aim however is not to build a definition of either of those terms which can then be used to make a further analysis of *Kelly's Heroes*, but to explore some of the complexity which is tied up within those apparently relatively simple notions of genre. This is meant as a means of understanding the ways in which the critical (and to a lesser extent the academic) community were (and are) using these genres to position their own discussion of the film. This does, to some extent involve a definition of sorts, especially for the 'traditional

war' genre, however it should be noted that as far as possible this definition only exists as a product of the source material, rather than as something existing apart from that. That is, the aim is to evaluate some of the ways in which these genres have may have been conceived, as opposed to arguing for any specific and definitive definition.

Lawrence Suid begins his book by referring to a quote from the film Patton. A quote which in Suid's words "synthesized several of Patton's exhortations to his officers on the eve of the Normandy invasion" and that "in classic terms, glorified military combat as the highest form of manliness" (Suid, 2002:1). The quote itself argues that (all) Americans love to win, and love a winner, and as such will always win. What is significant though is Squids, perhaps purposeful, blurring of the man Patton, with George C. Scott, the man who played him on screen. The 'he' to which Suid refers is both men, literally referred to as "Patton-Scott" (Suid, 2002:1). As such, this quote encompasses much that can be argued to be integral to the notion of the 'traditional' war film: the glorification of battle, the depiction of victory and the genre as ultimately the domain of the male. Within this a sense of the need for strength and dominance pervades. This is viewed as a genre which speaks of something to do with being American, it exists not just as a form of entertainment, but as a reflection of an ideological state which is, given the nature of the films it encompasses, one which the viewer should aspire to. This is in addition to, and above the films use of military imagery, weaponry and costume, reoccurring tropes and storylines. That is, the archetypal war film does not just feature military men defeating their enemies, it presents this in such a way that it supports the notion that not only is victory a positive thing, but the process by which it is achieved as equally affirming, having a transformative effect on those who fight. Effectively the glorification of military combat can be seen as much as glorification of War more generally, with opposing military forces as representatives not just of, but for the countries for which they fight.

This separation between the political stance of the war film and the simple use of military imagery is an important one. There is little evidence to suggest that *M*A*S*H* was ever understood as displaying traditional war movie tropes both in terms of its use of combat imagery and ideologically speaking, both because it was seen as a comedy and because it was identified largely as in opposition to that political position on conflict which defines the 'traditional' War movie. *Kelly's Heroes*, by contrast, makes extensive use of tropes which can be seen to conform to 'traditional' notions of war films. The lead characters stoically, and in some respects heroically journey to victory. The character of Sgt. Kelly is not a source of comedy as he proficiently and aggressively leads his men. Ideologically speaking the victory over the enemy is as positive here as the personal triumph of the soldiers involved. They are ultimately on the 'right' side, in spite of their self-serving (and illegal) actions. However, this stance is undermined by the inclusion of characters such as Oddball and his men, who openly and actively go against the notion of combat. That these characters are also the most overtly comedic is potentially a consequence of the expectations associated with war films. There are no other examples of films released during the 1960/70s featuring a tank commander who actively eschews combat, with perhaps only Yossarian of *Catch 22*, of a far lower rank and not occupying a command position sharing his outlook. Representations of officers such as Oddball are a distinct rarity, which leads to the question: to what extent was *Kelly's Heroes*, as a film which features such a depiction, understood as a war film? Answering this question is more complicated than simply arguing that the film conforms to expectations of the use of military hardware, heroic characters and eventual success. The comedic aspect of the film not only undermines those tropes but also, quite explicitly, the politics associated with those tropes.

The question could conceivably be addressed from an angle which foregrounds comedy, and asks what influence the combat element has upon this. Why this is a less common approach though is perhaps because unlike combat films, where certain

elements such as uniforms and weaponry are ubiquitous, there are no similar universally recognised comedic tropes. Mittell notes of genres that “some are defined by setting (westerns), some by actions (crime shows), some by audience effect (comedy), and some by narrative form (mysteries)” (Mittell, 2001: 5). The impetus of comedy, and its definition as a genre, the ‘audience effect’ Mittell refers to, revolves around the generation of laughter, a goal which is associated with no particular set of on screen conventions. ‘Revolves around’, as opposed to completely focuses upon because there are films which could conceivably be understood as comedy which do not aim to make their audiences laugh out loud. Indeed, the comedic genre is subdivided based upon the way, and the extent to which this laughter (or similar) is generated; slapstick comedy clearly operates in a different way to satire, but the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive. That comedy is often identified as secondary to other genres could also be a consequence of the actual act of laughing, and the extent to which a viewer finds a film or scene amusing, being subjective. It is arguably far more difficult to deny that a film is, in terms of genre, a war film, if its characters are dressed as soldiers and fire weapons, than it is to argue that a film which was not found to be funny is still a comedy. It becomes evident in Suid’s discussion of *Patton*, and in academic work concerned with all three films discussed in this project that the war and comedy genres are also understood in relation to their perceived social worth. A film which ‘has something to say’, be it direct and didactic or allegorical, is somehow seen as more worthwhile for the viewer than a film which does not. This type of value judgement is perhaps associated with the success of *M*A*S*H*, and is certainly an aspect of the discourse surrounding *Kelly’s Heroes*. Here a type of hierarchy is evident, with more value associated with satire than comedy which is not satirical.

As such the question of which genre *Kelly’s Heroes* is, and the effect this has upon, especially for critics, how good it is, informs either explicitly or implicitly the vast majority of the discourse surrounding the film. The answers found vary throughout the

first year of the film's release, and are especially interesting because unlike *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* one of the key features of this discourse is the heavy involvement of the studio and film makers. This means that the work on *Kelly's Heroes* presented here can be seen as comprising an attempt to trace a discourse whose participants are often far more visibly attempting to alter its trajectory than is evident with the other films in this study. It has been shown that *M*A*S*H* was, and continues to be understood through the, relatively speaking, simple rubric of the extent to which it was regarded as an anti-war film, or a comedy. Its position within either of those categories depends heavily on events that are ancillary to it. In terms of genre, and potential genre categorisations, the position *Kelly's Heroes* occupies is far more complex. As with most films, genre is the key marketing tool with *Kelly's Heroes*, and this work posits that there is a high likelihood that it was seen by those marketing the film as a gateway to the sort of counterculture driven success enjoyed by *M*A*S*H*. However, whilst the success of *M*A*S*H* can be seen to have at least partially occurred as the result of events beyond the control of the studio or film makers, there is significant evidence of attempts by the makers and marketers of *Kelly's Heroes* to more actively engage with that same audience. Therefore a key aspect of the study of *Kelly's Heroes* here is a focus upon the different ways in which it has been regarded in terms of genre, especially because those marketing the film can be seen as especially responsible for a relatively wide range of differing responses to that aspect of the film.

This work links those attempts to alter the discourse surrounding the film with the responses of the critical community and the wider historical context, identifying potential reasons behind the initial failure to find an audience in the same way *M*A*S*H* does. It also attempts to trace the relationship between the re-factoring of genre later after the film's release and its path to eventual (relative) success. With this in mind it should be noted that whilst the other two chapters in this work focus heavily on a relatively short period of time after the films are released, not looking far beyond

the end of 1970 in either case, work on *Kelly's Heroes* encapsulates a far wider time scale, taking the study right up to the late 2000s. This is a response not only to the more recent popularity of the film, but also the relative difference in academic responses to the films in question. Whilst the emergence of a solid, dominant understanding can be seen relatively soon after the release dates of *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* the lack of consensus which still remains with regard to *Kelly's Heroes* in this respect affords the opportunity to investigate a longer term discursive change.

Therefore, methodologically the work presented here on *Kelly's Heroes* takes a very similar form to the previous chapter in that it is concerned with the ways in which the film is written about, presented and discussed in the popular media. Specifically it seeks to trace the ways in which these discussions evolve, primarily with the understanding that they serve as a dynamic and perpetually changing representation of the films position in the cultural milieu, but also in that there is something to be learned about that cultural landscape from the study of the film and that which concerns it. Perhaps more so than the films themselves, the study of those utterances which take the film as their subject, and the relationships between them, gives access to a set of participant's views and opinions concerning not just the films, but also the culture within which they exist. That those participants often occupy the privileged position of film critic, or have access to wider audiences through a popular media outlet only serves to strengthen the bond between the film, that which is written about it, and the wider cultural landscape. Equally, it is important to understand such a bond not simply as a relationship, but to position and understand those cultural artefacts fundamentally within, and as an integral part of that wider discourse. Each text is only as important as the information it conveys, and within this there must be care taken to approach each text without pre-conceptions.

Early Reviews and Mentions

Kelly's Heroes and *Catch 22* were released almost simultaneously, certainly within the same week, and probably within a couple days of each other. Reviews of *Catch 22* begin to appear in papers on the 25th of June, whilst *Kelly's Heroes* reviews appear slightly earlier, on the 21st. The limited, and press screenings of the films makes it relatively difficult to pinpoint exact release dates given the nature of exhibition in 1970, where extremely wide releases and universal release dates were rare. What is important is that the two films may well have been competing for the same theatre real estate and were certainly being reviewed in the same papers and sometimes even by the same reviewers. Whilst necessary comparisons between responses to the two films are often as revealing about *Catch 22* as they are about *Kelly's Heroes*, they are made primarily in this chapter, rather than the one that follows, simply because it is useful to juxtapose the often mercurial nature of the marketing for, and responses to *Kelly's Heroes* with the relatively consistent trajectory of the discourse surrounding *Catch 22*, as well as that of *M*A*S*H*.

The first such comparison is concerned with the discourse surrounding the films prior to their release. *M*A*S*H* was rarely mentioned in anything but the specialist trade press prior to its release. This reflects its status as a relatively small, low budget production with a director with only a couple of film projects behind him and cast of, if not completely unknown actors, at least none who could be readily identified as hugely recognisable stars⁴. Equally, the book upon which *M*A*S*H* is based was not, prior to the release of the film, selling extremely well. With so little in terms of reference points for newspaper readers there is little that could be said about the film other than that it

⁴ Whilst Donald Sutherland had accumulated the largest number of acting credits (14) by 1970 Elliot Gould's performance in *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice* was arguably more significant than any of these roles. Tom Skerrit had worked on 3 films prior to *M*A*S*H*, also relatively minor roles.

was in production. *Catch 22* represents almost a polar opposite, the book had sold well and was widely recognised (the impact of this is discussed in the following chapter), the directors previous film had performed well at the box office (*The Graduate* took \$104,642,560 at the box office for its first release, and was subsequently re-released twice (Box Office Mojo, 2014)) and there are number of extremely recognisable actors involved in the production. What is also significant though is the notably long production time for the film. This frequently forms the basis of many of the early references to the film. It is perhaps symptomatic of the success of the book that these references are not concerned with the content of the film, but with the process of making it. There is an assumption that the reader already has enough knowledge of *Catch 22* that they will have some conception broadly of what it is about. Effectively, there is an understanding that the reader will know what *Catch 22* is. This concept becomes less ambiguous when juxtaposed with the early mentions of *Kelly's Heroes*. Unlike *Catch 22* this is a film which is not based on any previous work, there is no clear frame of reference for a reader in this regard. The absence of these references may mean that writers must *provide* indicators for the reader at a more basic level. These reference points are explicit and implicit, sometimes intentional and sometimes not, but by identifying them it becomes possible to see exactly what the writer perceives to be the key things that must be understood about the film to effectively engage in the discourse surrounding it.

Kelly's Heroes is mentioned at least twice in columns by Earl Wilson. It Happened Last Night was specifically concerned with news from Hollywood and celebrity culture, and was syndicated in papers across the country. It was relatively light hearted and jovial in tone and finished with The Weekend Windup. This segment is ostensibly an amusing section of the column, but the name also refers to the type of news it conveys – short (typically two or three line) sections mostly concerning casting information. On May 16th a mention of *Kelly's Heroes* reads simply “Telly Savalas’ brother George Savalas

makes his film debut with Telly in '*Kelly's Heroes*'" (Wilson, 13:1970). The brevity of the mention is typical. This lack of additional information signals a clear reliance on the reader having a good understanding of the people the writer refers to. Telly Savalas here does not require any qualification, whilst his brother, yet to make his film debut does require the family connection. Whilst it is difficult to effectively judge the degree to which Telly Savalas would have been a recognisable figure, he was certainly a successful (in terms of number of projects) film actor, having worked on over twenty widely released films prior to *Kelly's Heroes*. This is a very brief piece of information relies on the assumption the reader has some sort understanding of, that there is interest in that person, and that moreover that interest translates into interest in their siblings.

Equally, because the Savalas brothers are explicitly linked with *Kelly's Heroes* a reader with no prior knowledge of the film can begin to infer things about it via this connection. Telly Savalas carries with him a set of film connections, notably the propensity towards roles where he played the villain (*The Dirty Dozen*, *On Her Majesties Secret Service*, *The Scalphunters*), as well as high profile roles in a number of popular combat films. Clearly the references any given reader might have with regard to Telly Savalas may be very extensive, be limited to just one or two films or be even more insubstantial connections, such as recognising the name from a poster or previous review. But whatever the nature of the readers understanding of Telly Savalas, this will become associated with *Kelly's Heroes*. Here, potentially, this would lead to the assumption that *Kelly's Heroes* is a combat film, and that Telly Savalas plays the villain. Whilst this is clearly something which cannot be incontrovertibly proved, it being so reliant on the readers personal experiences, this process of building up notions of what the film may be about is equally evident in another Weekend Windup entry. This reads: "Don Rickles was "Killed" in the original script of *Kelly's Heroes*, but was such a hit in the rushes that the story was changed to have him merely wounded (Wilson, 85:1970).

Having begun his career as a stand-up comedian, before progressing to television, then film roles, Don Rickles was a well-known comic actor at the time of the film's release. Moreover he was well known as an 'insult' comedian, a persona which was adopted in almost all of his work. Far less equivocally than with Telly Savalas, Don Rickles carried with him a very clear set of expectations for an audience. A later review of the film states that Rickles "tosses out strong comedy lines, but Don is a dedicated actor. He studies, takes lessons and one of these days he'll be given a role that will show him in a new image"(Miami News, 1970:B4), indicating that, at least at the time of *Kelly's Heroes*, Rickles was extremely well known for his comedy roles, and had yet to break away from this type. As such, whilst a reader associating Savalas with *Kelly's Heroes* can draw from a relatively wide set of associations; one who relates Rickles to the film is far safer in the assumption that he would be playing a similar sort of characterisation to previous roles. Beyond this his performance is asserted to be sufficiently good, and again, here it may be assumed that this means amusing, that the script was changed at short notice so that his character may 'live'. Here again is a subtle indication as to the genre of the film. The involvement of Rickles signals that there is at least a comedic element to the film. However the fact that he was originally scripted to die indicates that this is perhaps not as straightforward as this, that the script had to be changed shows that Rickles was originally not a hugely important character. Within this is a further set of expectations, first, that a reader would not expect a newspaper article to reveal a potentially important script element – such as someone living or dying, but also that there is some degree of understanding of the film making process, both in terms of how the shooting process works in that the script could be subsequently changed, and in the use of the film making terminology 'rushes'. The article is written with the understanding that it will be consumed by readers with a perhaps better than average interest and understanding in the film industry.

Whilst discussing these utterances it has been convenient to refer to them as 'early mentions'. This is because they occupy a space at the beginning of the chronology of utterances which explicitly refer to *Kelly's Heroes*, and because their brevity marks them as something other than the reviews and articles which appear later. It is noted that the designation of 'early' is predicated on the discourse being understood as finite, and with a start and end. However, it should be noted that whilst 'early' implies that these comprise a beginning or starting point to the discourse surrounding a film, it has been shown that this is not the case. These one or two sentence references rely on the readers knowledge, most obviously with regard to actors and the film making process, but also with regard to more subtle things like genre conventions and even conventions surrounding the discussions of films in the media (specifically here in that there is an expectation that important plot points will not be revealed). As such these utterances can be seen to occupy a space within an ongoing discourse surrounding movies in general, those who act in them and those who write about them. These texts rely heavily on the knowledge of the reader, and the extent of the knowledge that the reader may have is difficult to discover and quantify. In spite of this it is useful to discuss the structure and the way in which discourse operates, especially with those texts which are less studied, precisely because they refer to films which at the time of writing are essentially unknown aside from within the abstract realm of the readers imagination and insomuch as the discourse surrounding a text can be seen as a part of the text itself.

Here it becomes possible to ask how those small pieces of information regarding the film, written for an audience which is already engaged in the film making industry, and interested in its practitioners, compare to pieces written after the film is released. The Miami News printed one of the first full reviews of the film on the day of its release. The review carries no headline apart from the name of the film, and is anonymously written. The reviewer begins by immediately establishing the genre of the film: "Many situations

in "*Kelly's Heroes*" are familiar to those who have seen the movies of GI's in action during World War II" (Miami News, 1970:B4). Like those articles which refer to the film before its release the writer calls upon the readers' knowledge. The films genre is framed within a reference to earlier films. Because the writer has access to the film text a genre designation appears to be something which can be made with some certainty. The readers knowledge is employed to recall films they have previously seen of a given genre, to which they are assured they can compare *Kelly's Heroes*, as opposed to forming those links via the more circuitous route of identifying an actor with a particular genre which is then associated with *Kelly's Heroes*. However, in much the same way that Don Rickle's 'death' perhaps signalled that the genre of *Kelly's Heroes* is more complicated than it initially appears, the writer continues "but they've been given a twist to make the story entertaining and suspenseful"(Miami News, 1970:B4). The writer goes on to give a brief synopsis of the plot, identifying Clint Eastwood as Private Kelly and Telly Savalas as a sergeant. The primary plot motivator, the gold behind enemy lines is explained. This relates back to the "twist to make the story entertaining and suspenseful", which is never explicitly explained. However a reader with a good knowledge of the types of movies which are referred to in the opening sentence, a genre designation, would be aware that the conventions of those movies do not generally include the sort of personal gain motivations which are on display in *Kelly's Heroes*. This is compounded by the assertion that the "little band of Americans" (Miami News, 1970:B4) have larceny in their hearts. This is presented as a very different notion to the types of storylines expected of 'traditional' WWII action movies discussed at the beginning of the chapter, the men are primarily "thieves", albeit ones who "turn into heroes "(Miami News, 1970:B4).

The final paragraph of the short review discusses some of the actors in the film. Clint Eastwood, ostensibly the lead actor, and eponymous Sgt Kelly is identified as being "the same in the army as in the westerns, a downbeat actor" (Miami News, 1970:B4).

This short, and slightly disparaging description also calls upon knowledge of Eastwood's previous film roles, and can be juxtaposed with the assertion that whilst Don Rickles "tosses out comedy lines" he "is a dedicated actor"(Miami News, 1970:B4). Whilst this similarly calls upon knowledge of the types of role Rickles is well known for, it suggests that he is slowly subverting the expectations upon him, rather than, as Eastwood is doing, conforming to them. More prominent is the assertion that "Donald Sutherland is becoming a fine actor" (Miami News, 1970:B4). Though Sutherland has appeared in a number of films at this time, there is not a relatively long and well known set of previous film roles to reference. Significantly, he has played extremely different characters in all of these roles. Whilst Rickles serves as an example of type casting, and Eastwood has become very well known for a particular style of acting, regardless of the role, there is no clear and simple way to frame Sutherland's involvement in the films he has performed in.

However, the review states that Sutherland is "playing a tank commander with a sort of hippie flavour" (Miami News, 1970:B4). The relationship between Sutherland and the notion of the hippie, has its roots in the discourse surrounding *M*A*S*H* and the anti-war associations of that film. It is in the writing which appears throughout the latter part of 1970 about *Kelly's Heroes* that this relationship between Sutherland, the anti-war movement and the figure of the hippy really develops. This eventually comes to operate in a similar sort of fashion to those touch points concerning Eastwood and Rickles – a widely utilised reference for writers and those discussing the film and actors which eventually most writing is framed within.

The Canadian newspaper The Calgary Herald carries a large four column piece on *Kelly's Heroes* and Donald Sutherland on the 23 June 1970. The headline reads "New Brunswick-Born Actor, Donald Sutherland Plays Army Hippie In 'New-Type' War Movie" (The Calgary Herald, 1970:27). This places the focus of the article very much on

Donald Sutherland, his Canadian heritage being key. As well as Sutherland the headline highlights the genre of the film, 'New Type' marking it as something perhaps different and unexpected. The article begins by identifying the lead actors: "This different sort of war movie centres on five offbeat military characters played by..." (The Calgary Herald, 1970:27). Whilst the way in which the film is 'different' is not explicitly identified, the naming of Rickles first, then Eastwood, Savalas, Sutherland and O'Conner highlights the different types of genre associations these actors carry, supported by the assertion by the writer that they are "unusually cast". It is only towards the end of the next paragraph, which is mostly given to an unusually detailed description of production credits and filming details that the references to 'new-type' and 'different sort' of war movie are resolved in the micro plot synopsis: "involves the offbeat GI's in a behind the lines bank robbery during their Rest and Recreation period near the end of the Second World War." (The Calgary Herald, 1970:27). This is expanded upon with the promise of the type of action director Hutton presented in *Where Eagles Dare*, however this also comes with the promise that "laughter and character come first ... a comedy caper with a war background" (The Calgary Herald, 1970:27). Whilst these first five paragraphs of the review convey a large amount of information, from the actors involved, the director, and even the filming locations, this is all primarily in the service of conveying a sense of the film's genre. What is made clear via the genre associations the actors carry with them, in the qualifications such as 'new-type' and the more explicit quotes from director Hutton, is that the film fails to fit into a genre category that the writer feels can correctly represent it. Whilst the war aspect is clearly very important, Hutton's suggestion that it does no more than comprise the background for the comedic aspects of the film indicates that for those discussing it in 1970, in genre terms at least, *Kelly's Heroes* is relatively complex. Central to this notion of a less 'traditional' war film is the Oddball character played by Sutherland.

The section of the Calgary Herald review titled 'Plot Synopsis' is in fact a detailed description of the early parts of the film, from the discovery of the initial gold bar to the point just before the 'Heroes' embark on their mission behind enemy lines. The level of detail in the description is unusual in comparison with other contemporary newspaper reviews, as is the way in which the so called synopsis encompasses the entire first act of the film, but nothing beyond this. This unusual structure, along with the high level of detail in the production credits at the beginning of the review could indicate that this article is intended to promote the film rather than review it, insomuch as the two can be separated. Research into the theatres in Calgary suggests that *Kelly's Heroes* was not being shown in the area until the end of July (Calgary Theatre Guide 27.07.1970, 1970:15) over a month after the article was published (however *M*A*S*H* was being shown throughout the month of June). It is unlikely a theatre would commission such a piece so far in advance of the opening date, likewise, the only theatre for which there is evidence of screenings is a drive-in showing relatively old releases – there is no other evidence of this establishment engaging in such aggressive marketing. The article does however mention a number of other films Sutherland has recently appeared in, such as *M*A*S*H* and *Little Murders*. Most significant though is the mention of Sutherland's role in *Alex in Wonderland*, which is explicitly stated, like *Kelly's Heroes*, to be an MGM film. Some of the language used, and specifically the reference, ostensibly a quote from Sutherland about cycle gangs is extremely similar to a quote which appears in an article which appears in the MGM merchandising manual for *Kelly's Heroes*: "[i]n civilian life 'Oddball' would probably be a mechanic or the leader of a cycle gang" (*Kelly's Heroes* Exhibitors Manual, 1970:6). Here then is evidence of the studios potential involvement in the article, certainly supported by the high level of detail with regard to production credits, as well as the anonymity of the writer. This evidence of the studio/marketers interest in utilising the conflated persona of Oddball and Sutherland as a promotional tool advances the question of what it is about that

character which holds this appeal. With this in mind an analysis of the way in which Sutherland is portrayed in this article should be understood within that potentially promotional rubric.

The second half of the article begins with a section titled "the role of Oddball". Here Oddball (Sutherland) is described as "a hippie-type tank sergeant" (The Calgary Herald, 1970:27). This is followed by a brief overview of Sutherland's early acting career and some of his previous film roles (within which *M*A*S*H* is especially prominent, here Sutherland is described as an irreverent military surgeon) before returning to *Kelly's Heroes*. The writer once again describes the Oddball role: "a military hippie, a freak among weird-o's ... the bearded, pleasure loving tank commander blasts away 'negative vibrations' and keeps the faith in his treads, guns, and his raunchy, girl grabbing, pot-puffing men." (The Calgary Herald, 1970:27). The language used here is very explicitly relating the Oddball character to the counterculture movement. The use of the word hippie is particularly significant, especially in comparison with the discourse surrounding *M*A*S*H*. It has been shown that extremely strong links between *M*A*S*H* and the counterculture emerged throughout 1970 and the characters of *M*A*S*H* share with Oddball some of the key traits of the hippie archetype identified in the article: 'bearded, pleasure-loving, raunchy, girl grabbing' and 'pot smoking'. The similarities extend to the attitudes to war and the bureaucracy of the armed forces. Both the doctors of *M*A*S*H* and Oddball are involved in combat that they can be seen to be not entirely supportive of, and both actively seek to subvert the hierarchy they operate within. Oddball by initially attempting to remove his squadron from service, and then using the men and equipment in his control for personal gain, and the doctors of *M*A*S*H* in the consistent and effective control they assert over their superiors. However, throughout 1970 this research has found no evidence of the use of the word hippie to explicitly describe any character of *M*A*S*H*, which leads to the question, what is different about

the Oddball character? Certainly there is more overt evidence of what could be construed as drug taking on display in *Kelly's Heroes*, and Oddballs repeated use of phrases such as 'negative waves' or 'vibrations' correlates at least with more contemporary notions of the type of language used within hippie culture, but these differences alone do not account for the way in which Oddball was so readily, and without reservation identified as a hippie, whilst the doctors of *M*A*S*H* were not.

One potential explanation is that use of the word itself had become more widespread later in the year, however there is evidence of a widespread use of 'hippie' throughout the late sixties⁵, certainly to a high enough degree to assume that it was beginning to become a relatively well understood term at the beginning of 1970. It is potentially then more of a question as to why the characters of *M*A*S*H* were *not* identified readily as hippies, rather than one of why Oddball is understood as such. The answer then lies potentially in those who are doing the identification. It has been shown in the first chapter that the relationship between *M*A*S*H* and the counterculture, and within this the anti-war movement, developed over time partially as a result of a series of events outside of the control of those who made and marketed the film. It developed relatively organically, and whilst there is certainly evidence to suggest the film makers embraced this understanding of the film, and the success that came with it, there is little evidence to suggest that this was an explicitly planned aspect of the films promotion. The evidence which suggests the Calgary Herald article was written with the aim of promoting *Kelly's Heroes*, and Sutherland's appearances in other MGM releases, alongside the use of key counter cultural words such as hippie suggests that there is a far more active attempt by those marketing the film to court the counterculture. The articles publication date, very soon after the release of the film indicates this

⁵ Google's Ngram tool shows a steady increase in the use of the word 'hippie' from 1963, peaking in 1971

relationship is something the marketing was expressly designed to facilitate from as early in the release cycles as possible. The word hippie and the associated activities, particularly 'pot smoking' is used as shorthand for the counterculture, carrying with it a host of associations and meanings. Whilst these associations came to be made with *M*A*S*H* over an extended period, there is an attempt here to tap into the type of selling power (as discussed towards the end of chapter one) of these associations more immediately.

That the article is ostensibly focussed on Donald Sutherland is perhaps a consequence of the role he plays in the film - aside from a list of credits there is actually as much written about the Oddball character as there is Sutherland. Even the one direct quote from Sutherland: "In civilian life...Oddball would be the leader of a cycle gang or the manager of a rock group" (The Calgary Herald, 1970:27) is concerned with the Oddball character. What this focus on the film in the first half of the article and Oddball in the second, vs. the ostensible focus on Sutherland does is conflate the character and the actor into one. In the same way that the use of hippie here serves as shorthand for the counterculture, Sutherland is seen, possibly through his role in *M*A*S*H*, as being part of that same set of associations. The article serves to strengthen that bond as well as utilise it, with *M*A*S*H* prominently mentioned as well as it having a strong focus on the Oddball character. Elsewhere, Dave Simms identifies Oddball as "a communal leader before his time" (Simms, 1970:8) whilst Sutherland himself is quoted as part of an article focussing on his burgeoning film career, describing *Kelly's Heroes* as "essentially a light comedy, a light hearted caper. I like my character Oddball. He's an anachronism, a hippie ahead of his time, in World War II" (Thomas, 1970:18). What is significant here is not only that the character is identified as a hippie, but also that Sutherland is explicitly stated to 'like' the character. Again, this creates a strong connection between the Oddball character and the notion of Sutherland as a real person. The articles which mention Oddball and Sutherland together, and even those

which simply identify Sutherland as the actor who plays Oddball serve as much to construct a notional concept of Donald Sutherland as they do Oddball. They are effectively both characterisations, and there is a clear tendency to attach (primarily counter cultural) concepts which are initially tied to Oddball, by association, to Sutherland. Effectively to understand him as the driving force behind the character, as opposed to the film makers or script writers who created the character. Jean Walton notes that “after the release of *Kelly’s Heroes*, it became routine to refer to Sutherland’s “oddball” status (a term borrowed from the anachronistic hippie tank commander he played in that movie)”. Walton is discussing the ways in which Sutherland was perceived and understood, and that the character he played became a “a catch-all term, the euphemism that would substitute for everything about Sutherland that was too politically challenging, aesthetically complex, or sexually inassimilable” is telling (Walton, 2010:202).

The notion (attributed to Sutherland) of Oddball as the leader of a cycle gang or the manager of a rock group brings him into a far more contemporary sphere than the WWII environment in which the character ostensibly exists. The omission of the word ‘now’ in the sentence “in civilian life” expressly marks Oddball as a character who is understood in a contemporary sense without qualification. That this can occur so readily is perhaps a consequence of the way in which film itself operates. In another key difference to *M*A*S*H*, whose characters, in spite of their behaviour, can never be seen to step outside of the milieu, practices, expectations and culture of the Korean War, differentiating themselves only in their actions, the Oddball character seems to have far more, aesthetically and philosophically, in common with the 1960/70s than the 1940s. The potential drug use, unusual (for the depicted period) taste in music and attitude to the conflict meant that Oddball was widely understood as an anachronism by contemporary critics. The character as a hippie is not explored or explained, that the

reader (and by extension the viewer) will understand what this is and entails is assumed.

Throughout this work direct analysis of the films themselves has been kept to a minimum, viewing analysis of writing and media contemporary to 1970 as a far more accessible route to understanding the ways in which the films were understood. Equally, this method removes the danger of analysis which might erroneously introduce more modern notions or associations where they were not originally present. However the reviews and articles we are concerned with here go into relatively little detail as to why, and how the Oddball character functions as an anachronism, and rarely detail the reasons behind the associations they draw between the character and the counterculture in any real detail. As such, direct analysis of the film is carried out to identify precisely what it is about the Oddball character that encourages this reaction and to discover the extent to which these connections can be seen as obvious or clear enough to the viewer/reader that they do not need to be outlined explicitly. Clearly, methodologically speaking this is a departure from the work which has been carried out to this point. Here there is a danger that conclusions could be drawn in line with personal (and recent) notions of what the counterculture was, and how the character of the hippie (or actual hippies) were viewed during 1970. Therefore, throughout this direct analysis care has been taken to note where assumptions have been made, and where possible to compare the Oddball character with those which surround him, for the one thing the reviews and articles which mention him do make clear is that he is markedly different from the other soldiers of *Kelly's Heroes*.

Immediately noticeable, in contrast with the other characters depicted in the film is that the Oddball character's appearance is not in line with expectations of WWII combat personnel. His hair is long and he is the only lead character with a beard and moustache, the only other men with facial hair are his squadron. His clothes are largely

military issue, but, again, in comparison with the other characters, are not regulation, and he sports a mismatched assortment of items from across the military spectrum. In addition to the standard dog tags Oddball wears an Iron Cross, a German military decoration. This indicates some potentially contradictory things about him. The first is that he is happy to loot - the reasonable expectation is that the cross was retrieved from a dead soldier. Possibly, what the act of wearing the cross does though is demonstrate a sense of solidarity with the enemy, it is not worn as a medal would normally be, there is no sense that Oddball is identified explicitly as having some level of involvement with the German military, but that he wears the cross at all demonstrates at least a partial disregard for the concept of military loyalty. This is supported by the attitude Oddball and his men demonstrate when they are first introduced. When asked where his commanding officer is Oddball explains that he had died a number of weeks ago, but they it had not yet been reported. He explains “we see our role as essentially defensive in nature, while our armies are advancing so fast and everyone is knocking themselves out to be heroes we are holding ourselves in reserve, in case the Krauts mount a counter offensive”

Whilst this could be construed as a genuine concern regarding Allied movements through Europe, resulting in a desire to place themselves in a position to help should the need arise, the entire speech takes place with Oddball off camera, whilst the viewer is shown scenes of the squadrons camp. The men, mostly dressed like Oddball, are sitting or reclining, listening to music on a gramophone and distributing wine between them. Importantly there are also women present both engaged with tasks and reclining with the men. The way the camp is represented, with ample food, and very relaxed soldiers fundamentally undermines the notion of a state of readiness for a counter attack, ostensibly the reason given for their position. Equally, as Oddball explains that the tanks he commands have been modified, he is careful to explain that they are as

fast going backward as they are going forward. The modification, arguably carried out to improve the performance of the tanks is in fact a device to keep the men safe. The preference to 'decorate the countryside using paint-filled ammo' (The Calgary Herald, 1970:27) is significant in that it precludes the use of live ammunition, and thus the taking of life. Likewise the method, which Oddball argues "makes pretty pictures" is to a degree artistic in nature. This, the playing of loud music as they go into battle and the activities on display around the camp mark the men as more sensually attuned than Sgt. Kelly, who stands and impassively surveys them. Ultimately the inactivity of the men, or perhaps more the lack of the type activity expected of military personnel, as well as the modifications to the tanks serves as a representation of the characters attitude to warfare. Whilst this could be construed as cowardly or at least unfair to those men represented in the film who are suffering throughout the war the use of the paint filled shells, with their subtle suggestion of pacifism, their artistic nature and interest (as conveyed through their musical choice) in Eastern culture pulls the men firmly into the realm of the counterculture.

Oddball then, and his men, are markedly different from the other men in *Kelly's Heroes*, and that difference is specifically crafted to encompass as many cues as possible to the counterculture movement. Because these cues so obviously do not correlate with expectations surrounding the milieu of a WWII picture it is clear that they have been included for a reason by the film makers. Michael H. Drew argues in a review which appears in the Milwaukee Journal on the 26th of June, that "[e]very new film, even historical treatise like this GP rated epic needs a resident hippie" (Drew, 1970:9). The use of language such as 'historical treatise' and 'epic' is used again to emphasise how out of place a 'resident hippie' is in the film. That it needs one though is a consequence of it being a new film, specifically part of a wider trend which encompasses 'every new film'. Oddballs inclusion here is presented less as a creative (or perhaps financially motivated) decision and more as a standard expectation of modern (in 1970) movies. It

is also slightly sarcastic in tone, the juxtaposition of 'historical treatise' with the concept of the anachronistic hippie is perhaps meant to signal this as an ill-advised notion, the way in which it is almost required giving a sense of mindlessly adhering to expectations. Drew identifies Oddball's beard, his use of paint-filled shells and use of music as the key notable aspects of his hippie persona. He continues: "[t]his character, you've detected, is the same nonconformist sort that Sutherland played so successfully in *M*A*S*H*." (Drew, 1970:9), explicitly associating, through Sutherland, the two characters, and the two films. This relationship is identified in many of the reviews and articles about *Kelly's Heroes*.

It is tempting to view the inclusion of the Oddball character as an attempt to generate, or emulate some of the success that associations with the counterculture earned *M*A*S*H*. However *Kelly's Heroes* was shot in 1969, before this success became evident, indeed, before the relationship between *M*A*S*H* and the counterculture had even been established. That the makers of *Kelly's Heroes* had decided that the inclusion of characters that so clearly reference the counterculture was far more likely a response to the growing influence of the counterculture in general rather than specifically aiming to emulate the success of *M*A*S*H*.

Advertising and Embracing Genres

One place other than the promotional articles where the studio could exert control over the extent to which the Oddball character was viewed as integral to the film after its release, and so strengthen those potentially lucrative counterculture ties, is in the advertising. There are essentially three different basic posters used throughout 1970/71 to promote *Kelly's Heroes*. The merchandising manual features two of these types, and a third appears regularly in newspapers and magazines. There is no evidence to suggest though that any of the three appeared at particular times, that is, there are examples of all being used concurrently in different outlets throughout the

film's release. What is significant about the three different poster styles is the ways they present the film in terms of genre.

The stylised, smiling, cartoon representations of the poster found on the front page of the MGM Exhibitor manual immediately signal that these men, in spite of their dress, weapons, and backdrop of smoke and fighter planes, are happy and enjoying themselves. The large dollar flag and gold bars indicate the mercenary source of their happiness. The Oddball character pours himself a drink whilst Sgt. Kelly, who never engages in such activity in the film itself (though he does use alcohol to get a German officer to reveal intelligence), carries a barrel. Overall the image is an extremely light hearted representation; the soldiers are happy, perhaps celebrating, and certainly not suffering. This is an overt juxtaposition with the expectations of warfare itself, but more importantly the genre conventions of war films, depicting sometimes horrific, unhappy experiences overcome by heroic soldiers. This becomes far clearer when the image is compared with posters for the 1969 film *Where Eagles Dare*. Again the image is drawn, but it is realist in style and depicts a scene of action. The heroes are clearly identifiable, in perilous situations but ultimately prevailing. Other 1970's posters for combat movies follow very similar conventions. *Tora Tora Tora* is illustrated with an image of fighter planes against a rising sun background, *Patton* with a photograph of the man saluting in front of an American flag in full military uniform, even *Waterloo*, a film depicting the 1815 battle of the same name follows the familiar pattern of images of the lead characters in uniform surrounded by scenes of battle. As telling is a comparison of the tag lines. The poster for *Where Eagles Dare* reads "One weekend Major Smith, Lieutenant Schaffer, and a beautiful blonde named Mary decided to win World War II", overtly heroic, with undertones of romance as well as subtly suggesting that for these people 'winning World War II' is something which can be simply achieved in a weekend. This tag line is markedly different to that used to promote *Kelly's Heroes*: "They had a message for the army: up the brass!" The accompanying image depicts

soldiers who clearly have little regard for the requirement to wear uniform appropriate to their rank and as such there can be no mistaking the phrase (reading 'the brass' as a colloquial term for higher ranking military personnel) for something to be taken to literally mean a desire to see those high ranking individuals rise even higher. 'The brass' here also refers to the gold the men pictured are carrying, an oblique reference to the brass band whose services are co-opted by Oddball in the film, or simply a play on the phrase 'up the ass'. It serves to denote some level of disrespect to the superiors of '*Kelly's Heroes*'. This signals not only that the men are perhaps not heroes in the sense that they are performing their duty in line with their orders effectively, or with particular zeal, but also that they are actively stepping outside of that military hierarchy.

As a whole the poster visually conforms to many of the conventions expected of 1970s war movie posters. However the silhouetted fighter planes, the (partially) uniformed men, recognisably militaristic, and the lines bisecting the image, perhaps representing tracer fire, are subverted by the smiling, stylised caricatured men, their dollar bill flag and their disrespectful message. If genre is viewed as simply a set of conventions then the poster can clearly be seen to be playing with, and subverting these conventions. Whilst this comedic take on the combat movie poster can be seen to convey the notion of the film itself as having its basis in the combat genre, with a heavy comedic emphasis, this is perhaps an over simplification. There arises the issue that unlike posters for combat films, which have some very clear source material such as uniforms, weaponry and battle scenes to draw upon, there are far fewer recognisable, repeated, genre motifs that clearly identify a poster as advertising a comedy film. The ways in which comedy is conveyed are far more diverse than the ways in which combat is depicted. Even when there are conventions, such as characters smiling, there are as many posters which depict no characters at all yet still convey the notion of comedy, the poster *M*A*S*H* serving as an example.

This arises from the differences in the ways the two genres operate. Both carry a set of expectations for the viewer, and whilst a combat film could involve expectations of visceral responses such as sadness at a heroes death, or tension as a bomb is diffused, there are perhaps far more expectations attached to the visual spectacle of combat films. Depictions of fighting, explosions, weaponry and soldiers are all integral elements to war films which translate very simply to the poster or advertisement format. Comedy however often has no physical manifestation, aside from laughter, this being the only thing which comes close to, for instance images of war planes on combat film posters, as a repetitive genre convention. As such the method of representing, and conveying the notion of comedy varies hugely from film to film, and with *Kelly's Heroes*, even from poster to poster.

The second relatively widely used poster, also found in the exhibitors guide, as well as on the front cover of the MGM tabloid herald, conveys the humour of the film in a far more surreal fashion. Eastwood, Savalas and Rickles are pictured in stars, which in turn appear inside a sandwich. This is a reference to Oddballs line in the film "to a New Yorker like you a hero is some kind of weird sandwich", though there is no reasonable way in which an uninitiated viewer could make this connection. The 'sandwich' has tank tracks attached to the bottom, and Sutherland as Oddball is depicted partially out of a 'hatch' in the top. Above him once again flies a flag which is recognisably a US dollar, however, unlike the first poster the image of George Washington has been replaced with a shocked looking man. Likewise the text which on the first poster read 'The Almighty Dollar', already a forceful subversion of the original "The United States of America", here reads 'The Almighty Buck', a potentially even more overtly subversive phrase. As such, comedy is conveyed here through the sheer surrealism of the situation. Rickles and Savalas are smiling or laughing, however neither Eastwood nor Sutherland are. Both look towards the right of the poster, Sutherland looking slightly confused and Eastwood with a look that could be construed as anger or distaste. This

expression is in contrast to the two smiling faces which appear to either side of it. Significantly, on the right of the poster, the direction of both Sutherland and Eastwood's gaze, sit a number of military images. A column of tanks appears over the top of the sandwich and a trio of fighter jets flies overhead. Next to the tanks is a stylised explosion, falling through the air are two bodies. The most obvious reading is that the explosion launched the two bodies into the air, however the scale of all of the elements of the poster are vastly different, the sandwich itself ostensibly being the size of a vehicle, but also serving as a landscape over which other tanks roll. This lack of a unifying sense of scale further heightens the sense of surrealism in the poster. The explosion and bodies represent a relatively horrific aspect of combat, and the expressions of Sutherland and Eastwood, particularly as they look in this direction, perhaps reflect this.

So whilst the first poster was a clear subversion of genre expectations, perhaps a comedic take on the 'traditional' combat film poster, here there is no similar basis for the second. Whilst combat is clearly signalled with military vehicles and explosions it serves rather as an interjection into a far more surreal comedic environment, rather than vice versa. As such it is far simpler to read this poster as a comedy poster, with military elements. This is despite the way in which only parts that are immediately identifiable as comedic are the smiling faces and the general sense of surrealism introduced by the oversized sandwich. The tag line "[n]ever have so few taken so many for so much" further confuses the position of the poster in terms of genre. It is not so readily readable as comedic as the tag line of the first poster; however it clearly does not speak to any of the ideals of heroism, suffering and sacrifice which would identify it as having a basis within the conventions of combat films. Whilst there is potentially a sense of comradeship on display here, in its re-imagining of the phrase from Winston Churchill's wartime speech "Never was so much owed by so many to so few" there is far more of a sense of irreverence towards the duty of those serving in the armed

forces. The 'heroes' are represented with this tag line, and in relation to the 'dollar bill flag' which flies above Oddball, as far more financially motivated than by any sense of doing their duty within their roles in the armed forces.

This in effect is a powerful subversion of the expectations of combat films and the material used to advertise them, where a sense of duty is often the primary motivator. This is a concept which is dealt with explicitly within *Kelly's Heroes*, the men are presented as exhausted, over-worked and without hope. The motivation is that dying whilst carrying out the plot to steal the gold is viewed as a far more attractive alternative to dying in the normal course of combat. The lack of loyalty and adherence to the military hierarchy is presented as an issue which arises out of the actions of their superiors, who are often presented as ridiculous and out of touch. Their behaviour is driven far more by a lack of understanding as opposed to any sort of active desire to make the lives of their men more difficult. The main characters respond to them with a sense of indifference or exasperation. Their motivation and subsequent actions, unlike the characters of *M*A*S*H* are not fundamentally driven by a dislike of their superiors, nor are they explicitly aimed at undermining or railing against them. Whilst both of the advertising tag lines discussed here can be read as undermining or subverting the expectations of heroism in combat movies, they also (the first perhaps more than the second) display a marked lack of respect for the military and military hierarchy. This can be seen as an active attempt to engage with some of the discourse surrounding *M*A*S*H*, specifically the responses to the attempts by characters in that film to overcome the bureaucracy of the army. Arguably *M*A*S*H* contains nothing which marks it as ostensibly anti-war, yet the anti-military stance of its characters is a key aspect of it coming to be perceived as such relatively soon after its release. This is not to say that the advertising for *Kelly's Heroes* is actively anti-war. However that an anti-military stance is so explicitly conveyed here, when it is far less present in the film itself potentially signals a desire within the marketing to manipulate discourse surrounding

this aspect of the film in that direction. Effectively, the film itself does not appear to have an overt anti-war agenda, nor is it overtly anti-military. However the marketing is carefully constructing a sense that the film does contain those elements to engage with a certain cultural trend, notably one which has been seen to previously translate into extremely widespread success.

To understand this better it is helpful to place the marketing within the context of the rapidly changing cultural and social attitudes towards the Vietnam War in the USA at the time of the film's release. If 1969 saw a major uptick in anti-Vietnam War activities in America, then the time between the release of *M*A*S*H* in January of 1970, and the release dates of *Kelly's Heroes* and *Catch 22* in June of that year can only be seen as a further escalation in anti-war sentiment. Whilst *M*A*S*H* was released as ongoing press attention into the My Lai massacre kept the war, specifically negative attention towards the war, very much on the front pages of the newspapers, *Kelly's Heroes* and *Catch 22* were released a short while after President Nixon controversially announced the American incursion into Cambodia, a move which many Americans saw as an unnecessary escalation. It has been argued that the protests at Kent State University which followed at the beginning of May, and ended with four students being shot dead after failing to disperse when asked, were a result of this announcement. The killing of civilians on home soil once again bought the war and the anti-war effort into the media⁶, which, significantly, was increasingly framing its coverage of that anti-war movement within an understanding of its key participants being members of the counterculture movement. Obviously *Kelly's Heroes* was developed and shot during a time when anti-war activity was increasing significantly, however it is only after shooting

⁶ An example of the strength of the perceived implications and cultural ramifications of the shooting was the decision to award photojournalism student John Filo the Pulitzer prize for a photo he took during the aftermath (Pulitzer Prize 1970)

has finished, as the film is being edited and prepared for release that these events served to re-invigorate and to some extent change the focus of the anti-war movement. Within this cultural landscape attempts to relate *Kelly's Heroes* to this movement, and thus replicate some of the success that *M*A*S*H* continued to enjoy through this relationship could have been extremely desirable.

Given this potentially lucrative relationship with the counterculture it is perhaps surprising that the original trailer explores character motivation in a slightly different way again. The gold is very quickly established as the motivation behind each of the key characters involvement. Sgt. Kelly shows each man the gold bar he has and their expressions, as well as the sound track reflect their immediate desire. These expressions, as well as the non-diegetic sound which accompanies the revealing of the gold makes these moments comedic. This presents the gold as an irresistible object, the men have an almost physical response to its desirability. No discussion about the viability of the plan is shown once the gold has been revealed; it alone is enough to convince the men that the endeavour is worthwhile. The 'gold reveal' montage is followed by the introduction of Oddball and his men as well as a number of the more comedic moments from the film. By the time the final part of the trailer begins, which shows large amounts of explosions and military vehicles, the film has already been firmly established as a comedy. Moreover the motivation of the men, far from having the potentially slightly callous and selfish impact which the second poster conveys, is presented as something that they simply cannot help. Also, as evidenced by the intense montage towards the end of the trailer, there are significant action scenes in the film. Like the posters the way the film is conveyed in the trailer can be discussed with regard to the extent to which it conforms to genre conventions. The comedic aspect of the film is clearly signalled both through the motivation of the men and via a number of quick amusing segments. This is very different to the ways in which comedy is conveyed in the posters for the film. Whilst the trailer can and does make extensive

use of amusing jokes and phrases directly from the film, the posters must rely on far more abstract methods to represent the comedic element. The notion of combat however is conveyed in a very similar way in both the posters and the trailer. There is a significant amount of military hardware on display here as well as large explosions. No-one is shown actively engaging in fighting though, no guns are fired and whilst the explosions are clearly dangerous there is very little suggestion of danger to the characters depicted. Clearly this is a very minor distinction, however it is important in that with the absence of immediate and direct danger also comes an absence of a number of other key war genre traits – heroism, honour, and even the death of comrades all require the characters to be placed in danger, facing seemingly difficult tasks over which they eventually prevail. The acquisition of the gold is here presented as this type of difficult task; however there is nothing in the trailer to suggest that the characters suffer during their mission. The explosive end to the trailer is presented more as spectacle. Because its purpose is not to demonstrate the danger the characters are in, largely because their place within it is never shown, its significance becomes the way it looks. Whilst this is still presented essentially as combat serving to accent comedy rather than the other way around, and in spite of its almost neutered nature, spectacular images of explosions and military hardware serve to significantly strengthen the films combat genre credentials.

The trailer and the posters all convey two key notions about the film, that it is set in a military context and that it has comedic elements. What varies is the extent to which either of these notions can be seen as defining the films genre. The advertising cannot fully be seen as understanding the military context as anything more than this; they do not posit the film as a combat film with a comedic bias, but as a comedy film inhabited by the military. The way in which the characters are conceived in the tag lines is very different, and clearly ties them to varying extents to notions of expectations of characters in combat films. In effect the characters are judged against expectations of

the behaviour of characters in combat films rather than comedy films. This is a dichotomy which is removed in the trailer not only because their motivation can far more easily be established, but also the military context is immediately evident. The trailer introduces the further element of the action scenes towards the end. Whilst the lack of danger marks them as a far more benign spectacle, the presence of this imagery clearly aligns with expectations associated with the combat genre.

There is a third poster for *Kelly's Heroes* which does not appear in the MGM merchandising manual, but does appear at least as frequently in newspapers throughout 1970 as the two posters which do. This poster completely reverses the 'comedy film with a military context' bias of the first two posters and the trailer. Here an image of the main characters dominates. Like the other posters, Savalas, Sutherland and Rickles are smiling (Eastwood is not), however all of the characters are either holding or firing weapons. This is in stark contrast to the gold and alcohol the characters carry in the first poster. Equally, the dollar bill flag of the other posters is not present here. Indeed, neither the gold nor any other motivational factor is present in the poster at all and it is only with the start of the tag line "[t]hey set out to rob a bank..." that this becomes evident. The poster features a large tank, identifiably the enemy, which points out threateningly towards the viewer. The four characters, which can be related to their close up images above, walk defiantly and seemingly without fear towards it. Aside from perhaps the use of relatively bright colours towards the top of the poster, and the smiles of the characters the poster is almost archetypal in its inclusion of combat genre expectations. The "heroes" are clearly identifiable, as is the enemy. The explosion at the centre of the poster with readily identifiable bodies flying into the air above it indicates a degree of danger, whilst the presence of weapons, and their being fired makes it clear that fighting occurs. As a concept this is almost absent from the other posters, and is presented in an impersonal, relatively harmless way in the trailer. The most significant difference between this poster and the other two though is

in the second half of the tag line. "...they damn near won a war instead". Here, whatever the motivation for doing so (ostensibly, robbing a bank) the actions of the characters are presented as having a positive outcome which aligns with the expectations of the actions of characters in combat films. Reinforced by the image of them walking towards the tank, there is a far clearer sense of the men being represented as 'heroes' here.

It is important to note again that these posters appeared concurrently and in similar newspapers. Whilst the third poster does not appear in the official merchandising manual its use is widespread enough to suggest that it was at least sanctioned by MGM rather than made for one specific exhibitor. With *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* there is almost absolute consistency, especially with regard to the genre the films are understood to be throughout the advertising. In comparison the advertising for *Kelly's Heroes* is extremely confused in this respect. One advert appears to align with expectations of combat film advertising, whilst the others can be seen to promote the film far more as a comedy. Whilst this generically broad advertising is not unique or problematic, here the two genres are not presented in such a way that they are entirely compatible. The advertising can be seen less to forward a notion of the film as a combat-comedy, with more or less emphasis on either of those elements, but as a comedy film, and entirely separately, a combat film. Because this lack of compatibility arises primarily out of the motivation of the main characters, taken individually the advertisements can be seen to either promote a combat film whose characters (albeit accidentally) uphold the central tenets of war films (heroism and success), or a comedy film whose characters are actively engaged in anti-military, or even anti-war rhetoric and activities. The final poster discussed here, with the tag line "[t]hey set out to rob a bank, they damn near won a war instead" is perhaps the best representation of the way these two opposing notions are reconciled in the film itself, the characters motivated by personal gain rather than out of any overt desire to oppose or undermine the military,

and whose actions almost accidentally lead to positive outcomes within the wider WWII context that the poster clearly references.

Advertising which foregrounds different genre aspects of a film is frequently used to target different audiences and demographics, as well as being used to develop certain themes or notions which are perceived to be particularly popular. However even when there is an obvious attempt to appeal to different genre conventions these campaigns still often display a measured consistency in terms of branding and style, repeating images or tag lines across all advertisements to maintain a cohesive sense of the films genre, whilst still highlighting elements chosen to appeal to specific demographics. More recently those variations have been distributed within media channels deemed to best align with the target demographic, an approach that means there is potentially less overlap of advertising anyway. What is apparent with *Kelly's Heroes* though is that this consistency is not present. Not only is there is evidence of advertisements and articles which barely relate to one another, conveying a relatively diverse sense the genre of the film, but these advertisements also appear in the same newspapers and even in the same merchandising manual. For comparison, with both *Catch 22* and *M*A*S*H* (and a number of other films contemporary to them) there is evidence of individual promoters generating their own advertisements and advertising content, however there is no evidence that the distributor itself was using anything but material which carefully forwarded a very specific notion of how the genre of the films was to be conceived.

The Critical Community

The slightly confused nature of how *Kelly's Heroes* is positioned in terms of genre in the advertising is reflected in reviews of the film. Because genre is one of the key ways in which audiences understand and categorise films, establishing it is frequently one of the first things reviewers do. A typical example is the statement George Anderson opens his review of the film with: "*Kelly's Heroes* ... combines elements of '*The Dirty*

Dozen’, ‘*Where Eagles Dare*’ and ‘*M*A*S*H*’ in a World War II adventure comedy that offers almost two and a half hours of action”. There is one definite genre categorisation here, that of ‘adventure comedy’. However this is far from the only aspect of the statement which conveys a sense of the films genre, and this additional information serves to further complicate what is already in its most explicit form a conflation of two genres. ‘World War II’ reads as a genre statement here, suggesting not only the specific temporal setting of the movie, but also evoking a certain type of war film. Whilst for modern audiences the differences in tone and purpose between 1960/70s WWII movies and more recent Vietnam based ones are perhaps relatively easily distinguished it has been shown that in 1970 were still no significantly popular movies dealing explicitly with the Vietnam War. There is however, still a palpable difference largely in terms of storylines between mission based WWII (and WWI) movies and something like *M*A*S*H*, set in Korea and clearly not following the same sort of ‘heroes journey’ structure.

*M*A*S*H* however is given as one of three films which serve as further genre reference points here. It is possible to identify the ‘criminal’ element of *The Dirty Dozen*, the heroism of *Where Eagles Dare*, and, essentially, Donald Sutherland (as Oddball), as the elements to which Anderson refers when he invokes these three films. However the reader, without having seen the film, does not have the tools to identify these elements. As a trio these films must be understood only with regard to the signals they give in terms of genre expectations, which, aside from a combat/war theme is relatively diverse. Equally the inclusion of these film titles serves to indicate to those who enjoyed those films that they might enjoy *Kelly’s Heroes*, however, again, the differences between the three, and the fact that they themselves (especially *M*A*S*H*) are also relatively atypical in terms of genre only serves to complicate this process further. Finally Anderson concludes that the film ‘offers almost two and a half hours of action’, a statement which if taken alone would imply that *Kelly’s Heroes* is an action

film, but feels in this context more like a statement made to convey a further genre category which works in tandem with the others. That is, there is little sense here that any of the genres Anderson alludes to are overriding or dominant, but that *Kelly's Heroes* is a mixture of them all. There is potential here to take this statement apart further, to try to piece together exactly what its implications are for the genre of *Kelly's Heroes*, however to do so would perhaps be to remove the spontaneity and cultural specificity which is a key aspect of genre categorisations. The way in which Anderson uses this brief attempt to convey the genre of *Kelly's Heroes* to open his review suggests that he feels that it is significant; though it's potentially very simple meaning to a contemporary reader belies its complexity. Whilst that reader would use their own experiences and knowledge, particularly with regard to the other films mentioned to build an understanding of the films genre, it is extremely likely that this will reflect the general lack of coherence in the original statement. Perhaps then, this statement is not so much an attempt to convey the genre of the film to the reader as a wholly resolved notion, but to convey to the hybrid, and potentially confused nature of genre in relation to the film.

Anderson argues that the film will be a 'big hit' amongst "patrons who like the old fashioned 'war is fun' school of film making'. This is a reference to the type of traditional war film discussed at the beginning of the chapter. What is important is that this can be conveyed so succinctly by combining 'old fashioned' with 'war is fun'. This is perhaps the clearest example yet of genre being well understood, yet completely transparent. Two phrases which on their own could have a potentially infinite number of meanings, when combined and understood within the rubric of genre, generate such a clear and easily distinguished vision of what the film is. This is not to argue that to all people this will mean the same thing. An understanding of the ways in which genre is delimited, and explained to others is a key aspect of learning genres. It certainly helps that Anderson has already referred to WWII films, as well as given a number of examples of

other films, specifically in terms of genre, to help the reader to associate 'old fashioned' with a specific type of (WWII based) war film. Anderson states that the film also contains "enough cynicism for the 'war is hell' advocates". This suggests that the lack of a definitive sense of genre expounded at the beginning of the review is perceived as an attempt to please what is understood as two very separate audiences. Anderson continues by dissecting which elements of *Where Eagles Dare*, *The Dirty Dozen* and *M*A*S*H* are present in the film. "The anti-glory elements" viewed as analogous to the criminal aspect of *The Dirty Dozen* and the 'dash of *M*A*S*H*' is seen to stem directly from Sutherlands involvement, and the Oddball character.

The similarity to *Where Eagles Dare* is seen to be "in the general approach to the material" a statement which could be said to rely heavily on the reader's knowledge of *Where Eagles Dare* to operate. Here though it is helpful to return to the notion of genre as far more than something which operates within, or arises out of the film itself. In doing so it becomes possible to argue that even a reader with no knowledge of *Where Eagles Dare* as an example of a specific type of combat film would potentially still have enough of their own experiences with that genre to draw upon to populate the review with the references required to draw the conclusions Anderson intends. By invoking a set of films, as opposed to discussing specific genre tropes which are, or are not present Anderson draws out of those films the readers own associations. This use of other films purely for the associations they have relies heavily on the reader to not only have an understanding of those associations, but also to piece them together to build a picture of the genre of *Kelly's Heroes* as effectively hybrid, conflagration of those associations. That this genre exists as much as a product of those associations as it does as a set of references to actual elements of *Kelly's Heroes* is a clear example of genre operating outside of the film itself.

For Anderson then the genre of *Kelly's Heroes* is complicated. There is an attempt to negotiate this by calling upon a set of interwoven and slightly dichotomous genre associations. This does serve to imbue the film with the perceived ability to appeal simultaneously to a number of different audiences. However, what must be suspended for this to take place is logic. The discussion of which specific elements of the other three films make up *Kelly's Heroes* is concluded with the argument that "[i]f such films work, logic is excess baggage". For Anderson this lack of logic is negated by the professionalism of the film, however it is indicative of the power of genre and the expectations that surround it that the genres cannot be seen to coexist unproblematically.

Anderson argues that the problems which might arise out of this lack of logic are negated by the fact that the film is 'so professionally done'. Degrees of professionalism could refer to any number of the hundreds of processes that go into the making of a film. One reading though is that Anderson is referring to the filmmakers, more specifically the scriptwriters abilities, in making what could be conceived as potentially disparate elements work together. Regardless of the actual makeup of Anderson's notion of professionalism, that it is a required as an opposing force to the lack of logic that the multiple genre elements introduces is indicative of the perceived power of those genres, and the expectations that surround them. Here it is discussed as almost inconceivable that they might co-exist without having some negative effect on the internal logic of the text. Clearly this notion, and the way in which Anderson makes use of other films to furnish his genre discussion is based within an understanding of genres as discrete and unchanging sets of conventions which are called into action when films are being developed and made. For Anderson the notion of making use of more than one set of these genre conventions is slightly problematic, but is negated by the professionalism on display, and ultimately does not impinge on the viewer's ability to enjoy the film.

Taking a similar view is Michael H. Drew, whose article carries the headline “‘Heroes’ another War Caper” (Drew, 1970:09). As this headline suggests, Drew discusses the film primarily as a war film, asking “[i]s what the world needs now another World War II picture? MGMs answer to that is *Kelly’s Heroes*” (Drew, 1970:09), as discussed earlier, even referring to it as a ‘historical treatise’ albeit one which “needs a resident hippie” (Drew, 1970:09). The caper aspect is not explicitly referred to; Drew obliquely refers to the mission as one to go “behind enemy lines to withdraw \$16 million from a French bank” (Drew, 1970:09) and notes what is seen to be an intentional resemblance to *Where Eagles Dare*. This lack of exploration of these aspects of the film suggests that Drew views them to be less significant than the World War II focus. The way in which Drew discusses genre here can therefore be seen as hierarchical, the World War II genre forming the basis of *Kelly’s Heroes*, into which the ‘caper’ aspect of the film is integrated. It is perhaps because of this hierarchy that there is no suggestion of any of the type of conflict Anderson identifies as a result of these multiple genres. Again, Drew relies heavily on the notion of genre being a set of conventions, however here he discusses them as if the category ‘war caper’ arises logically and un-problematically out of the addition of ‘caper’ elements to the main genre of war.

This is not to argue the notion of any given text interacting with notions of many different genres is inherently problematic, indeed one of the aims of this work is to argue that such interactions are in fact almost inevitable. However when genre is conceived in the way in which Drew and Anderson do, it is equally inevitable that the discrete nature of individual genres means they will be seen as incompatible. That is, it is only by working with the notion that ‘war’ as a genre and ‘comedy’ as a genre are wholly separate, and existed before they were attached to *Kelly’s Heroes*, that they can be understood as conflicting when that attachment is made. For Drew the multi-faceted nature of genre and *Kelly’s Heroes* is not even something which needs to be addressed, Anderson sees it as only a potential, but avoided problem. Other reviewers

also express concern about the effect this potential genre conflict has on the film as a whole. Norman Dresser's assertion that whilst the film "tries to offer something for everyone, and thus probably won't fully satisfy anyone" (Dresser, 1970:B2) is clearly viewed as a consequence of the film's mixed genre. This is described in what is probably an intentionally cumbersome fashion as a "World War II adventure comedy yarn" (Dresser, 1970:B2). Genre is viewed as something the film makers have used to make the film appealing, however the appeal of the World War II, adventure and comedy genres cannot be fully realised whilst they occupy the same space. John Laycock sees a similar issue in the film. Like Dresser, he feels that the film is entertaining, however the way in which the genres interact, or fail to interact is problematic: "[Hutton has] got lots of action, and lots of satire, but hasn't been able to make them march in step" (Laycock, 1970:35). Laycock argues that Oddball and the tank squadron, the main source of the humour in the film are kept too separate from Kelly and his men, who engage in far more action. Ultimately this failure to operate as a cohesive whole is the fault of Hutton who is seen to have been "over-run by the easy glamour and excitement of all that military hardware" (Laycock, 1970:35), at the expense of the comedic aspect of the story.

Dave Simms and Fred Wright also see genre related issues with *Kelly's Heroes*. Unlike the earlier reviews though these issues are about more than how enjoyable or entertaining the film is, they are issues that are grounded in the ethics of the relationship between war and entertainment, and more specifically the association of war with comedy. Simms opens his review "Maybe I'm just getting too old, but I seem to get edgy these days in movie theatres when the kids cheer and laugh as "the enemy" gets shot and falls to the ground" (Simms, 1970:08). The problem for Simms is not so much "[a]ll the dead bodies" (Simms, 1970:08) but the way in which, because so much of the film is seen as amusing, that the parts where violence and death are depicted are not dealt with in a fashion that is seen to be acceptable. The audience is

the site of the issue, Simms finds their reaction to death problematic, however it is seen as the fault of the film and the film makers that the audience is almost expected to react in this way. Simms states that the *Kelly's Heroes* may have been rushed through the editing process to "grab into some of the 'Catch 22' ticket traffic" (Simms, 1970:08) and argues that the film does share with it a sense of the "the brilliant lunatic asylum" (Simms, 1970:08), albeit without the depth. This discussion though is not related to the opening statement about genre issues, the relationship between comedy and war is seen as the only source of a problematic audience response.

Fred Wright sees the way in which war is represented in the film as similarly problematic, however here it is not audience responses that are the issue. The review begins with sarcasm: "Gee, wasn't World War II fun? All that noise and light and nary a whimper" (Wright, 1970:18). The issue is not with *Kelly's Heroes* alone, but what is seen as a tendency in Hollywood, which Wright explicitly notes "does not necessarily mean the place, but the vein", towards representing war as exciting and essentially harmless. Comedy is viewed as a potential antidote to this misrepresentation. In particular that the film comes, in Wright's view, very close to satire, is seen as a positive thing. Even though Wright makes it clear that the film is not outright satire, that the comedy is 'non-cliché' is a positive and a welcome alternative to "same old shoot'em up brand of Hollywood warfare" (Wright, 1970:18). If there is an attempt to categorise *Kelly's Heroes* here it is within a very careful language of degrees and extents. Satire is seen as a specific type of comedy, demarcated by the way in which it has a purpose other than to amuse alone. As such, the film is seen to a lesser extent to be a satire, perhaps slightly more to be a comedy, both of which are overridden by the extent to which the film is a cliché war movie. What is significant is that Wright not only has a clear conception of what each of those genres is and involves, but that there is no requirement to explicitly convey these notions to the reader. Wright discusses satire in such a way that suggests that it somehow has more value than comedy which is not

satire, however why or how this is the case is not conveyed. Equally Wright appears to feel comfortable in the assumption that those reading his work will have formulated similar conceptions of genre as himself. Similarly Simms' assertion that "perhaps I'm getting old" (Simms, 1970:08) signals an awareness of the way in which these shared notions develop in line for groups of similar ages within the same cultural context. That is, when reviews refer to genre, especially when it is used to denote specific things about a text, they only function because they are intended for a reader who has, by and large, occupied a similar temporal and physical space as the reviewer. The reliance on shared experiences, shared history and shared space is emphasised when reviews make value judgements based on genre. When Wright discusses the multiple genres of *Kelly's Heroes* as a hierarchy he does not need to justify or explain how this operates because he is writing for an audience which share his understanding.

Attitudes to Genre

There appears to be a relatively wide variety of attitudes to genre in *Kelly's Heroes* on display in the articles which concern it appearing throughout 1970. They range from those that focus on one aspect of the genre over another, to those that discuss multiple genres and the various conflicts (or avoided conflicts). In comparison to the articles concerning *M*A*S*H*, where a large degree of homogeneity is evident towards the end of the year, those concerning *Kelly's Heroes* never display a similar consistency during the 1970s. It could be argued that the discourse is broadly reflective of that of *M*A*S*H* before the film wins the Cannes film festival, and is banned by the military, however even this comparison sees responses to *Kelly's Heroes* as the more diverse and unpredictable. This is not to argue that discourses should, or will be consistent, but to signal that the discourse surrounding *Kelly's Heroes* is in fact the less constant of the two. However, within the erratic discourse surrounding *Kelly's Heroes* there is one thing which ties almost all of the articles and reviews together, and that is their lack of a clear decisive sense of what genre the film is.

This overarching lack of consensus when it comes to genre is not limited to the critic's reviews. It is equally as present in articles such as the one discussed earlier in this chapter, which are advanced as reviews, but are actually promotional in nature. As aspects of the marketing these can be seen to add to the discussion of genre with reference to *Kelly's Heroes* from a slightly different starting point to the critical community. Likewise, the other marketing materials - the posters, and the trailer to a lesser extent all contribute significantly to the sense that genre in *Kelly's Heroes* is something which is unresolved. From the initial marketing, to the reviews at the very end of the year, an implicit question is consistently being asked, what genre is *Kelly's Heroes*?

Viewing the discourse within the rubric of this question does signal that a change of sorts occurs later in the year. Early reviews and the posters are largely positive towards the notion of the film having or being multiple genres, viewing them as a selling point or a natural response to changing expectations of audiences. Towards the end of the year, this has changed into a far more questioning stance. The way in which war and comedy are mixed is seen as increasingly problematic, or the comedy is simply not seen as satirical enough. The change is perhaps best signalled by Simms' exploration of the similarities between *M*A*S*H* and *Kelly's Heroes*, a connection so often made via the Oddball character, here is made through the General Colt character "for whom war is like a football game". Here the connection operates around the relatively simplistic concept of the absurdity of treating war as a football game, as opposed to the (perhaps more complicated) connection involving Donald Sutherland's involvement in both projects, as well as the similarities in the character he plays – within this a sense of his (Sutherland's, or Oddbal's) place within the counterculture movement. There is far more evidence in the earlier reviews that the 'hippie' characters were seen as the primary source of the comedy, and somehow more significant than the other characters.

Reviewers initially draw regular associations between the Oddball character and the counterculture movement both with regard to the language used to discuss the character and the way in which Oddballs attitude to the war is presented. It is significant that these descriptions never extend beyond a relatively tentative link to the counterculture, usually via the assertion that Oddball and his men are hippies. At no point is there evidence for the character being seen as in any way explicitly 'anti-war'. This dichotomy is partially identified by Anderson – "[e]xactly why these precursors of the hippie life should be interested in such a mercenary goal as \$16 million is not made clear" (Anderson, 1970:10). Beyond this, that the men would engage in violent conduct, seen as anathematic to the 'hippie' lifestyle marks them as something other than true members of the counterculture. Thus, by undermining the Oddball character as the only real source of this link to the counterculture the position of the film itself is undermined. Key within this notion is the extent to which the film can be seen as saying anything about the Vietnam War or war in general. Wright's discussion of the extent to which the film can be understood as satire can as much be understood as a discussion of the extent to which the film can be understood as social commentary, satire being frequently linked to this (Gray et al. 2009:12). Effectively, because the critical community is to some extent drawing a link between the film and the counterculture but not extending that link to a sense of the film as anti-war, the former is seen as having little substance. The counterculture is present only stylistically, the film has either very little to say about war or Vietnam, or is viewed as too problematically courting what are seen as 'traditional' war genre tropes – in this guise, incompatible with a stance which serves as social commentary. Whilst the critical community does not explicitly state this about the film there is evidence to suggest that awareness of this dichotomy grew throughout the year, with reviews appearing in the latter part of 1970 far more likely to call into question the motivation of the film, and far less likely to place emphasis on the Oddball character or his men.

This gives a sense of the film and its marketing as representing a self-conscious attempt to cultivate a connection with the counterculture, ultimately seen to operate on a level which is too based in aesthetics rather than engagement with a particular ideological or political stance, to be seen as effective social commentary. It is perhaps this lack which marks the point of difference between *Kelly's Heroes* and the two other films which are so frequently understood as a pair, *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22*. This engagement with the counter-culture, and the anti-war movement clearly has some value attached to it. Because *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* are seen to engage far more effectively with that social discourse surrounding war and the Vietnam War they are discussed far more frequently than *Kelly's Heroes*. This notion of value is tied to the ways in which the anti-war elements of these films were and are perceived to evolve.

The relationship between *M*A*S*H* and the counterculture is viewed primarily as organic⁷, often posited as an almost symbiotic relationship - *M*A*S*H* as an integrated part of the counterculture. Likewise, *Catch 22* is discussed as a bona-fide satirical text, with the weight of a well-respected, both critically and in terms of sales, novel behind it. *Kelly's Heroes*, without this weight in either source material or counterculture acceptance, is viewed right from the time of its release as a film which includes elements which appear to have been designed in a self-conscious fashion to appeal to a perceived counter cultural audience. That this was too obvious is one of the logical responses to the question of why the film ultimately failed to appeal to that audience. However, it is equally likely that the juxtaposition of those counterculture elements with those which were seen as overtly conforming to the conventions of War, which elicited

⁷ This is perhaps most obvious in work which discusses the film as influenced by the counterculture, for instance Berkin et al discuss the counterculture and the politics associated with Woodstock at length before arguing that the film arises within and out of this cultural context. (Berkin et al, 2007:871)

such a diverse range of responses from the critical community, were equally divisive for audiences of the film.

It was noted at the beginning of this chapter that unlike with *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22*, *Kelly's Heroes* did not appear to neatly conform to an overarching narrative of anti-war readings, counterculture engagement, or any consistent notion of the way in which the film should be understood or analysed. The academic work on *Kelly's Heroes* is, perhaps beneficially, inconsistent in terms of its focus. This has a direct impact on the conclusions drawn and has meant that there is far more breadth in the academic discussion of the film than with *M*A*S*H* or *Catch 22*, in spite of the overall level of engagement with the text being much smaller in comparison. It has been shown that this unresolved sense of the film has its roots in the ways in which it was marketed and understood at the time of its release, and continues to perpetuate to some extent in academic work (as manifested by the breadth of this work). This confusion only arises when the Oddball character and his men are read as counter-cultural references. Without this reference point the men simply become soldiers who act slightly differently from those around them. They are anachronistic only in that they are associated with a particular group or movement which is itself associated with a particular time, the late 1960s and early 1970s. That for critics of the film writing at the time of release this was their present, and that the counterculture movement was particularly apparent, serves to explain the heightened tendency to draw these associations. Likewise, the marketing campaign, and the discourse surrounding Donald Sutherland especially, both contribute to this. Effectively, these things, as well as the presence of the Oddball character in the film serve to introduce the counterculture into the discourse extremely frequently, regardless of the fact that ultimately critics and academics alike appear to dismiss the relationship as a tenuous one based within aesthetics.

Masculine Programming & Clint Eastwood

There are a number of factors which indicate that the popularity of *Kelly's Heroes* has remained relatively consistent up to the present day. In comparison with *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* the film is shown more frequently on network television⁸ in the USA. This may have something to do with the potential relationship between the initial popularity of those two films and the subsequent licensing costs. Whilst video and DVD sales figures for the three films are not available the comparative number of releases and re-releases again suggests that *Kelly's Heroes* has maintained a high enough degree of popularity over the long term to support sales. What this means is that whilst engagement with *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* after 1970 has been largely academic, there is a significant amount of material pertaining to *Kelly's Heroes* available as a result of reviews/discussions of re-releases, upon which this research can draw.

Equally, the death of director Brian G. Hutton in 2014 led to a renewed focus on the film, with mentions of it appearing primarily in obituaries. Frequently *Kelly's Heroes* and *Where Eagles Dare* are cited as his most significant works. It is still apparent that there is still no strong consensus with regard to what genre *Kelly's Heroes* should be seen as in 2014. For instance *Variety* calls it "a heist film masquerading as a war film" (Dagan, C. 2014). However far more prevalent in 2014, especially in this context, are references to the film which posit it as simply a war movie. The *Hollywood reporter*, in an article which is syndicated in at least two other outlets discusses Hutton as "director of classic war films *Where Eagles Dare* and *Kelly's Heroes*". Likewise the *LA times* states that he directed "a handful of films — including the Clint Eastwood war movies "*Where Eagles*

⁸ At the time of writing, based on listings across all US channels. This may well be a result of the relative cost of licensing the films, the repeated showing of *Kelly's Heroes* on the GRIT channel indicates that a license for multiple showings was purchased, whilst similar licenses for *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* may be prohibitively expensive or unavailable.

Dare" and "*Kelly's Heroes*". This apparent pairing of *Kelly's Heroes* with *Where Eagles Dare* is multifaceted. Whilst it primarily can be seen to arise out of the two films sharing a common director (Hutton) and lead (Eastwood) of equal importance is the degree of success the two films are seen to have shared in relation to Hutton's other work, and also, significantly, their genre. There is evidence that this pairing was being made at the time of the film's release however it is the shared director and lead actor alone which form the basis of this. Genre however was often seen as key point of difference. The more recent pairing is reinforced by the DVD and subsequent Blu-ray release of the two films as a box set, under the heading "Action Double Feature". There is a clear use of genre here as a selling point for the films, however it is one that is far removed from the original marketing campaigns mixture of surreal comedy and war tropes.

Screening rights for *Kelly's Heroes* were purchased by Grit T.V. and the film was scheduled almost weekly in mid-afternoon weekend slots throughout 2014. Grit T.V., utilises the tag line 'Television with Backbone' throughout its marketing and is defined very much as an outlet for action and adventure movies and westerns. Concomitant with this is the networks extensive use of imagery associated with action movies (guns, barbed wire, and silhouettes of action figures). Here then is a network which operates almost entirely within a notional understanding of a particular genre which is used to both to inform content and its marketing. What the press releases associated with the launch of the network, and its 'sister' station 'Escape' make very clear is that this is very much tied to an understanding of the action genre appealing to a certain demographic. For Grit this is 25-54 year old male viewers (Grit and Escape acquire rights, 2014). Significantly though the network does not argue simply that these are films male viewers will enjoy, it very specifically argues that these are films with strong, heroic male characters, and that it is a key factor in what makes them enjoyable for male viewers. The Grit website features biographies of actors (universally male) which foreground not only their film roles, but also aspects of their personal life which fit

particularly well with the 'Grit' notion of the male. The biography of actor Charles Bronson for instance notes that he "worked the strenuous and dangerous job of a coal miner", that he served in WWII and that he has "tenacity and tough guy charm", explicitly, "in real life" (Charles Bronson, 2014).

The very notion of gender demarcated 'male and female' networks relies on a stereotypical notion of male and female viewing preferences and to a large extent stereotypical notions of males and females themselves. In an effort to understand the way in which these stereotypes operate (and to some extent determine their validity) Mary Beth Oliver explores research into the impact of the gender of characters, "dramatic themes", biological distinctions and gender self-perception on the ways in which male and female viewing practices are conceived (Oliver, 2000:223-229). Oliver ultimately concludes that there is no single or simple explanation for the perception of gendered viewing practices (or at least here the belief that they are prevalent enough to support the programming of a television network) calling them a "manifestation of the complexities of biological and culture forces" (Oliver, 2000:230). It is perhaps simpler then to ask why *Kelly's Heroes* was not understood in the same type of hyper masculine way that its inclusion in the Grit canon implies when it was released in 1970. It would be possible to argue that the type of gendered outlet that Grit represents was simply not present or perhaps even a possibility, given the relative cost of operating a television network. However the discourse surrounding other films, significantly, films which are in some respects extremely similar to *Kelly's Heroes*, such as *The Dirty Dozen*, are acutely gendered in many respects. The advertising for *The Dirty Dozen* especially speaks to all four of the characteristics Oliver identifies, the male group is pictured actively engaged in combat, at the peak of physical condition, whilst women are overtly sexualised, the (poster) tag line 'Excite Them!' associated with an image of men and women embracing explicitly indicating that the (only) role of the female is to excite. This is not to argue that the advertising for *Kelly's Heroes* is not gendered also.

It is represented as a distinctly male domain, combat is heavily referenced and indeed, the film itself depicts of women in a very similar fashion to *The Dirty Dozen*. However, whilst this can very much be seen as an appeal to the male audience, and as a fundamentally masculine film, it does not utilise the same notion of character identification and the extension of that character into the 'real world' as Grit does.

The Grit website does include in its entry on *Kelly's Heroes* one of the original posters, however the main image used to represent the film is a large close up of Clint Eastwood, another actor whose Grit biography mentions time serving in the army as well as his "tough-guy stare and cowboy debonair". The use of Eastwood as the primary selling point for the film is notable in that it effectively side-lines Sutherland, the focus of so much of the discourse surrounding the film at the time of its release, including the advertising. Neither the character of Oddball, nor Sutherland in what Grit refers to as 'real life' can be seen to connect with the way in which Grit conceives of the stars of the films it shows, most specifically with respect to their attitudes to conflict. Oddball is reticent to engage in combat whilst there is a significant amount of evidence to suggest that Sutherland himself was/is actively anti-war⁹. Effectively, for *Kelly's Heroes* to work within the Grit conception of male orientated programming it needs to be re-factored as an action or combat movie and its comedic elements must be ignored. This is primarily undertaken through the figure of Clint Eastwood, but also by *actively ignoring* the role of Sutherland, who is not listed as a "star" of the film. Indeed, nowhere on the Grit website is Sutherland mentioned in association with the film.

It is possible to argue that the inclusion of *Kelly's Heroes* in the Grit canon can only come about as the result of the network themselves effectively re-factoring the film in

⁹ As noted in the first chapter, Sutherland went on to create and perform with Jane Fonda on the 'Free the Army' tour, an anti-Vietnam War tour/show which was recorded and released on film in 1972.

ways it was not initially understood by the critical community, foregrounding aspects or actors that were initially understood as less significant. However, it is equally important to understand how this re-factoring *can come about*. Tom Keogh argues, in a review of the film that coincides with a re-release on DVD that “Sutherland's hippie G.I. doesn't have the sardonic and timely appeal he did during the Vietnam War, but the film's irreverence and several of the performances are worth a visit.” (Keogh, T.). The Oddball character is seen very explicitly to relate to the counterculture and the Vietnam War. Because the counterculture cannot be seen to exist in the same way that it did in 1970, carrying with it all of the cultural touch points such as clothing, drug use and protest which were seen to define it, and because the Vietnam War is over, it is no longer possible to conceive of opposition to this war as an aspect of the counterculture. Were it still possible to understand the Oddball character, and *Kelly's Heroes* in relation to the counterculture as it was understood in the 1960/70s the type of re-factoring of the film along more masculine lines, with the figure of Eastwood as the key site of this, may not be as possible.

This serves to highlight the complicated way in which film genre is conceived. Here is evidence of a noticeable difference in the way in which *Kelly's Heroes* has come to be understood in comparison with the way it is conceived in the discourse which surrounds it at the time of release. This difference can be seen to occur because one of the key discursive points, the film's relationship with the counterculture as a current significant movement, has now become to some extent moot, but more than this, it relies on constantly changing and interwoven concepts, including masculinity, male stardom, viewing preferences both actual and perceived, and changing expectations associated with particularly the combat and comedy genres. The difference can be attributed to no single one of these points and the extent to which they contribute could vary highly in a different context. Within this, whilst the way in which these differences are tied to the consistently fluctuating nature of the culture in which the films and their

audiences exist makes it appear almost inevitable that the ways in which films are conceived of in terms of genre should change, this is not necessarily the case. With *M*A*S*H* it was shown that the way in which the film and its genre has been discussed remained relatively consistent after an initial period of disorder, though this in no way precludes it altering in the future based upon any number of impetus. The change of focus visible in the discourse surrounding *Kelly's Heroes* meanwhile is so heavily associated with its marketing that it becomes difficult to ascertain if this reflects, drives, or actually entirely comprises a more culturally based shift (insofar as the two can be separated). The entire process is unpredictable and can only really be understood as it is occurring, or in retrospect, as this work has attempted to do.

Dominant Notions and Fluctuations in Discourses

The research presented here ultimately serves as evidence of the ways in which genre informs and affects the discourse surrounding a given film, as well as the ways in which it is utilised within that discourse both by the makers/marketers of the film, and those consuming it. Equally, it demonstrates that whilst this demarcation between consumers and producers is a useful way to structure exploration of the sources the reality is that they are engaged in the same wider discourse, whilst the tools they employ to facilitate that engagement may vary their roles within it are not definitively hierarchical or solid.

In the same way that certain notions about the films discussed in this work can be seen to become dominant, widely accepted, and thus propagate, similar types of trends grow around actors and other personnel in the public eye (E.g. directors, producers). There is a very strong relationship between these trends; key notions in the discussion of a given person, and the meanings which are associated with the films. This is clearly a consequence of them being of the same discourse, but this is not to say that these associations are always organic in their development. Sutherland's role in *Kelly's Heroes* serves as an example of both a concerted effort at the film making stage, and

in the material generated by the studio to promote the film, to both court, and proliferate the types of associations the reviews of the film discussed here were drawing. This demonstrates the way in which genre is used not only by audiences and critics to understand and discuss films, but overwhelmingly by the film makers and studios to sell their films in a certain way. This example is more complex than the simple use of genre tropes on a poster or trailer. The collision of the Oddball character with the real life persona of Sutherland, the ways in which the character is used in the advertising, and the inclusion of the Oddball character in *Kelly's Heroes* at all, all highlight the role of genre and its status as a cultural concept in the sales and popularity of films.

With regard to the notions of discursive trends and dominant meanings, as noted in the first chapter, the ways in which a given film is understood are subject to constant and unpredictable change. So unpredictable is this change that even conscious attempts to alter the trajectory of the discourse may fail to result in significant variation, whilst something as simple as changing the outlet within which a film is made available can lead to an almost complete revision of the apparent understood meaning.

In the same way that an understanding of *M*A*S*H* comes to dominate (relatively soon after it is released) there is evidence of a similar process occurring with *Kelly's Heroes*, however this occurs later after the release of the film. This understanding is signalled by an extremely widespread shift in the way in which *Kelly's Heroes* is discussed. That this process occurs after, and over many years, as opposed to in reaction to one relatively isolated event is an indicator both of the volatility inherent in the way in which genre is understood and that the process of change can be slow and indistinct enough as to be barely noticeable. Clearly there is evidence to suggest that with regard to *M*A*S*H* at least, a change occurred which was widely accepted and propagated early in the film's release, and that after this the ways in which it has been understood and discussed have remained relatively stable. Understanding this discursive shift as a sort

of narrative it is tempting, to view it is a kind of 'settling period', a phase of intense change and uncertainty which eventually leads to a degree of agreement that remains going forward and always. However research into *Kelly's Heroes* has shown that whilst a similar type of widely accepted understanding of the films genre developed, albeit over a far longer period of time, it is still possible for that to be disrupted and for further shifts to occur. Stability is an illusion brought about by the longer time scales involved, and when the film is re-visited the fragility of that notion is fore grounded.

If the first chapter can be seen to argue the viability of discussing genre and genre categorisations as notions which exist outside of the texts to which they directly refer, the second chapter serves to demonstrate that an inherent aspect of this principal is that the notion of genre must constantly be in a state of flux. Because it exists only as cultural construct, rather than within, or as an attribute of the solid, unchanging film. It is in fact unreasonable for there to be any expectation that genre in reference to any specific text would remain in a state of perpetuity, and to do so, certainly in the academic context is reductive.

The final chapter here investigates *Catch 22* with this notion in mind, exploring the ways in which the films status as an adaptation of a highly regarded novel (and perhaps viewing this as an aspect of genre) guides the discourse surrounding it, within both the critical and academic communities.

Chapter Three: *Catch 22*

“Do you think of *Catch 22* as an anti-war film?” (Glemis. 1971:268)

The key aim here, as with the first chapter of this work, is to address the disconnect between the way in which *Catch 22* is currently discussed within the academic community, and the way that it was being discussed at the time of its release. As with the first two chapters this is undertaken by analysing the output of the critical community, the studio/distributor and those involved with the film. Whilst the first two chapters of this work structure both the sources they call upon, and the analysis of those sources in a largely chronological fashion, this chapter adheres far less strictly to this organisational structure. This is to better allow other types of relationships to be drawn between sources. The sources used in this chapter do all share the same temporal space; they were all published in 1970, or earlier in the run up to the film's release. However, unlike the work on *M*A*S*H*, which demonstrated that an apparent consensus of opinion arose out of reactions to certain events, there are no similar, discourse altering events evident in the case of *Catch 22*, and as such there is little evidence of a similarly dramatic change in tone and direction. This is not to argue that such a change does not occur, but to note that both its causes and effects may be more subtle. Analysing *M*A*S*H* was a process which focussed primarily on exploring how the ways in which the film was discussed altered, based on events surrounding the film as a cause and effect model. With *Kelly's Heroes* this was linked to the ways in which its genre was interpreted and discussed. With *Catch 22* adding the impact of the film's perceived relationship with the novel upon which it is based to the ways in which the marketing constructs the film, as well as the reactions of the critical community, means that there are more facets to the discussion of the film presented here. These aspects

are in many ways far more relationally complex than in the previous two chapters.

The chapter begins by investigating the ways in which reviewers of the film related it to *M*A*S*H*. The aim here is to understand what it is that drives the perceived relationship between these two films, and ultimately explore the potential link between the ways in which *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* are related at the time of their release to the ways in which they are related by academics more recently. This relationship with *M*A*S*H* also relates to the way in which the film has been understood as associated with the anti-Vietnam War movement and the youth counterculture, however, it is not seen as the sole reason that this relationship developed. As such, critical work which does not explicitly link *Catch 22* with *M*A*S*H* is explored as a potential source of this aspect of the current academic understanding. Within this is an exploration of discussions of the film that are also concerned with its philosophical stance. These two sections are ultimately concerned with analysing the ways in which the critical community was mediating its understanding of the film, both in terms of genre and, often, highly personal responses to the film. Though this is discussed later in the chapter it is useful to qualify the term 'personal responses' here, to counter the argument that all critical responses to film are to at least some extent personal. The term as used here refers to those critical responses which relate the film/novel to the critics own personal development, or very explicitly to aspects of their personal lives as a means of forming and conveying opinions about it.

Following this is an analysis of the marketing of the film. This explores the ways in which the films distributors engaged with the films relationship with the novel, and the more personal aspects of this that had developed within the critical community. The extent to which the marketing serves to perpetuate this conception of the film is also explored. The third part of this chapter further explores the ways in which the critical

community was exploring more personal relationships with the film later in its theatrical run, as well as exploring some of the less favourable responses to the film that are based in genre led readings. These discussions are invariably related to the role of the novel in the development of certain ways of understanding of the film. This can be seen as, to some extent, an exploration of the perceived relationship between the film and its source material, drawing in the question posed in the introduction of the effect of the novel as satire and social commentary on perceptions of the film when it was released. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the potential role that the perceived importance of the film has on its inclusion in the contemporary film canon. It asks if its presence is predicated as much on its alignment with *M*A*S*H* than its own relationship with key cultural issues - and beyond this the consequences of undermining that relationship.

In meeting these aims the work presented here on *Catch 22* builds on that of the first chapter, exploring a relationship between the film and the anti-Vietnam war movement which features far more complex linking aspects than the relatively straightforward chronology established with *M*A*S*H*. It also builds on the work of the second chapter by asking what affect the canon, both literary and film, has on the way in which *Catch 22* was and is perceived. This is something that is closely related to genre, but here the analysis goes beyond an exploration of the relationship between genre and the way in which film was marketed. As such the chapter represents a methodologically similar analysis to the other two chapters, but demonstrates the viability of that methodology in analysis of perhaps the most complex, multi-faceted and nuanced discourse presented in this work.

Whilst the way in which *Catch 22* has been discussed and understood in academia has been covered earlier in this work it is worth briefly returning to some of the key aspects

of this discussion to provide context for the work that follows. However it is also useful to highlight that whilst the academic discourses surrounding *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* are linked, some aspects the academic discussions of the two films operate very differently. More specifically, in many respects work on *Catch 22* evolves in a very different manner to that of *M*A*S*H*, an aspect which is not wholly addressed in the introduction but is of key importance to the following discussion.

*M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* are referred to frequently in academic film history contexts, and these discussions are usually brief. Equally, there is an overwhelming tendency to see the two films as related in this context. When the two films are discussed together there is a sense that *M*A*S*H* is prioritised over *Catch 22*. The former is frequently mentioned first, a tendency which potentially speaks to its earlier release date, however it is also commonly discussed in terms which frame it as *more* funny, or *more* anti-war than *Catch 22*. The reasons for this are potentially manifold, however it is likely that the level of success the two films enjoyed, as well as the perceived critical response to the films plays a key part in this tendency to discuss one film more than the other.

The Wiley Blackwell History of American Film argues that the film industry chose to present anti-war sentiments in films about other wars, *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* serve as examples (Lucia. Grundmann. Simon. 2012:14). David Cook also sees the two films as related via anti-war sentiments, arguing that the film adaptation of *Catch 22* was "spiked with anti-war rhetoric to enhance its youth appeal. The anti-Vietnam subtext was even clearer in ... revisionist combat film *M*A*S*H*" (Cook, 2000:163). Less regularly, but still common is work which understands *Catch 22* in similar terms but without twinning it with *M*A*S*H*. For example Ray Pratt argues that *Catch 22* prefigures "the more bizarre events of Vietnam" as well as "capturing some of the surreal insanities of World War II military life ... and anticipating a world of centralized

bureaucracy and globalized capitalism" (Pratt, 2001:111). This description of the themes of *Catch 22* is as concerned with the novel as it is the film, and makes it clear that the film's status as adapted from the novel is seen as an important aspect of the text.

Discussion of the novel and the film is far more prevalent in academic work completed soon after the film's release (broadly, 1970-1980) when the topic engendered far more in depth discussion than is evident in the film history contexts. Some of this earlier work is primarily concerned with analysing the success of the film through the rubric of its ability to adapt the novel. James Monaco argues: "*Catch 22* was an inflated homage that fell of its own weight. It had none of the testy, manic impatience of Heller's great novel" (Monaco, 1979:227). Some other examples of this type of analysis come from Les Standiford, who views the film as extremely successful in its adaptation (Standiford, 1974:19-25) and Jack Clancy, who argues that the adaptation is less successful and lacks coherence (Clancy, 1971:99-101). What is significant about these analyses is the rubric by which they are measuring success. There is no suggestion here that the film fails or succeeds in adapting the novel in terms of the kind of anti-war sentiment that the more recent academic work suggests is a key aspect of the film.

Earlier still comes Chuck Thegze's examination of *Catch 22*, which was published very soon after the film was released in 1970. This work is again concerned primarily with the process of adaptation and is particularly interested with how screenwriter Buck Henry and director Mike Nichols worked through the issues of translating such a dense work (the book is described as having the consistency of fruit cake) into a two hour film. Beyond this Thegze discusses the novel in terms that foreground its existential, humanist aspects. Here the question of translating these elements of the novel to the screen is one of style. That is, to elevate the film from a simple depiction of Yossarian's

struggle within the army bureaucracy to one which carries the perceived emotional gravitas of the novel requires very careful stylistic choices. Thegze argues that the decisions have been made with the care they require and his argument is supported by quotes from Nichols and Henry, the implication is that there is a deference to the novel and its themes and it is the job of the film and the film makers to make their adaptation as faithful as possible (Thegze, 1970:7-17). One of the strongest contrasts between this discussion and the more recent ones is the depth of the analysis; the sense of enquiry that Thegze demonstrates is replaced in later work with a far more assertive notion of what the film is about and how it operates.

Thegze is not alone in this desire to understand the film in terms of its aims. Also published in 1970 is Joseph Gelmis' book *The Film Director as Superstar* (Gelmis, 1970). This book reproduces interviews with a number of high profile directors of which Nichols is one. One key passage of the interview reads:

G: Do you think of *Catch 22* as an anti-war film?

N: I suppose.

G: Does that word disturb you? Anti-war? Does it sound too pious?

N: Nobody wants to make a pro-war film. And I don't know what an anti-war film is.

It's like "Fuck Hate." Nobody likes war. It'd be like making an anti-evil film. Or a pro-good film (Gelmis, 1970:268)

The potential problems with assuming directorial intent based on assertions in interviews is addressed in the first chapter¹⁰ however it is significant that after the

¹⁰ This interview is not invoked later in the chapter, as interviews with Robert Altman in the *M*A*S*H* chapter were. This interview could potentially be used to argue against the assertion, from multiple sources, that the film cynically altered the source text to appeal more to the youth counterculture market. However, because this interview was

process of screen writing, and before the film making commences (the interview was conducted a week before shooting began) Nichols is given the opportunity to frame the film in simple anti-war terms yet is hesitant to do so. This indicates that certainly in the eyes of the director, in 1970 at the time of making the film, it is clearly more complicated in this respect than recent academic work which refers to it would imply.

The increased tendency towards discussing *Catch 22* in terms of its relationship with the Vietnam War appears to correlate with an increased level of discussion in film history contexts, a position it has largely come to occupy in the time since the millennium. This work also demonstrates a clear tendency towards a far more ready attitude to explicitly stating, rather than exploring, what the film potentially is about. Given that this appears to arise within the academic context relatively recently it may seem that the best way to answer the question of how this occurs would be to analyse the trajectory of that discourse beginning with far more recent work. That is, what is the value of investigating critical material from the time the film is released if the change in the perceived meaning of the film actually appears to occur at a much later date? The answer to this question lies with the way in which the more recent academic work fundamentally connects this way of understanding the film to the time of its release. Because these discussions explicitly argue that its contemporary audience saw the film in this way and link it to concepts such as the anti-war movement, the youth and the Vietnam War, this way of understanding is seen to arise very clearly out of that very specific time period. As such, investigating the evidence from that time should serve to

carried out before the film making actually commenced, and because at least to some extent the marketing is potentially equally responsible for this change, it does not realistically carry enough weight to undermine this argument.

highlight examples of contemporary critics foregrounding this relationship with the Vietnam War in their discussions of *Catch 22*, if not explicitly then at least in terms that might obviously later develop in this direction. Given that *M*A*S*H* is frequently viewed as sharing this thematic and temporal space with *Catch 22*, logically the first place to look for evidence of the Vietnam/anti-war connection is in that early critical work which does relate those two films.

Sharing themes and audiences? : *Catch 22* and its relationship with *M*A*S*H* in early reviews

Catch 22 is reviewed in sight and sound magazine at the time of the film's release. The review begins "[p]eople have been debating for months whether *M*A*S*H* is really an anti-war movie, but there should be no doubt at all about the intentions of Mike Nichols' bleak film of *Catch 22*" (Farber, 1970:218). That *M*A*S*H* is invoked indicates a definite sense that the two films were seen as analogous or related, and here this is ostensibly via the perception that they both share a common anti-war sentiment. However, the reviewer Stephen Farber argues that there is an ongoing debate surrounding the extent to which *M*A*S*H* can be understood this way, or more directly if it is, or is not an anti-war movie. As such the connection between the two films is potentially not that they are both anti-war films, but more that their status as such was ambiguous for some, though not Farber. That they share a common sense of uncertainty with regard to their anti-war status is quite a different way of understanding the perceived relationship between the two films than arguing that they are related in the simpler sense of both being anti-war films. It means that whilst there is the potentially shared anti-war trait the extent to which it is seen to be present could differ wildly between the two films and still leave the relationship unaffected. That Farber insists that there will be "no doubt" in this respect when it comes to *Catch 22* serves as evidence of this potential difference. Whilst the degree to which *M*A*S*H* can be understood as "really" an anti-war film is still debatable, here *Catch 22* is seen as a

definitely anti-war text.

This does not preclude the two films being related, suggesting that there is more to Farber's decision to invoke *M*A*S*H* in a review of *Catch 22* than simply to argue that one is more easily identified as an anti-war film. The review continues by arguing that *M*A*S*H* "seems more indebted to Joseph Heller's novel" (Farber, 1970: 218) in terms of its black comedy style, whereas this is less present in *Catch 22*. The insistence that *Catch 22* is more anti-war than *M*A*S*H* directly arises out of this stylistic difference. The description of *Catch 22* employs words like "bleak" and "sombre" (Farber, 1970:218), the antithesis of the "screwball black comedy" of *M*A*S*H*, which is described in this way alone. For Farber the type of comedy the two films employ is directly related to his understanding of the extent to which they can be seen as anti-war films - *M*A*S*H*'s ambiguity is related to its screwball black comedy, whilst *Catch 22*'s more definite anti-war sentiment arises from its rejection of this style. Importantly, though the novel is invoked as a measure of the type of comedy the two films employ it is never explicitly referred to as anti-war itself.

The novel's stylistic alignment with *M*A*S*H*, here, the less definitively anti-war film, means that it is also potentially not seen as significantly anti-war in comparison to the film version of *Catch 22*. However, towards the end of the review Farber states that *Catch 22* deals with a "more 'classical' subject" (Farber, 1970:219). His own inverted commas suggest a slight hesitation over the phrase which seems to posit war or more specifically anti-war as a classic subject matter (at least more classic than the subject matter of *The Graduate*, which is also mentioned) but equally speaks to the classic status of the novel at the time.

It is because of this 'classic' status that Farber argues that Nichols can "keep the

material under better control" (Farber, 1970:219). Specifically the films avoidance of the depiction of actual combat situations is highlighted as positive in that in their absence they cannot be glamorised. This is directly seen to heighten its anti-war message and the implication is that because the novel originally didn't deal explicitly with combat situations there was no impetus for Nichols to include them. This means that none of the reoccurring flashbacks of the death of Yossarian's flying companion Snowden (which takes place within a plane), numerous scenes of planes taking off/ landing, nor the bombing of the air base, are viewed here as combat scenes. These scenes are addressed elsewhere in the review. Snowden's death is understood as a painful experience for Yossarian. The bombers taking off is described as an interesting and original image and the bombing of the air base is attributed to the Milo Minderbinder characters "'benevolent' fascism" (Farber, 1970:219). These scenes are understood more as thought provoking or interesting and because of this are less easily viewed as conventional scenes of combat.

The bombing of the air base is, out of this context, a spectacular scene, a pyrotechnics heavy destruction of a large set. Had this scene involved the destruction of an enemy air base this could easily be seen as a celebration of destruction and glamorization of the bombers. However, because the scene depicts allied forces effectively bombing themselves it transcends this reading to become a commentary on the free market economics of war and their relationship with fascism. Effectively here this precludes understanding the film, and these scenes, as depictions of combat. The removal of the 'us vs. them' aspect renders them as something less concerned with jingoistic celebration (even perhaps just the aesthetics) of war and more a thoughtful condemnation of it. Farber argues that any depiction of combat, even that which is expressly anti-war, runs the risk of glamorizing or making it "seem exciting" (Farber, 1970:219). That this is not seen to occur with *Catch 22* serves to strengthen the extent

to which these scenes here are seen to have transcended the simple depiction of combat.

The Milo Minderbinder character, who is ultimately responsible for the bombing scene is particularly noteworthy for Farber, who cites the character as a key aspect of the film for which Heller, as author of the novel, is directly responsible. Implicit in the statement that "Heller deserves credit for some of the film's best conceptions..." (Farber, 1970:219) is an understanding of the film as an imperfect adaptation of the novel. If there were there no sense that the film alters the material then a far larger proportion of the film could be attributed to Heller. Farber ends his discussion of the Minderbinder character by highlighting a scene where "lighting and composition make him look like a sinister Nazi". The decision underline the fascist nature of the character so forcefully is seen as unfortunate, and carries the implication that the responsibility falls with Nichols rather than Heller. The review ends with the assertion that the film is "unquestionably a failure", Nichols' failure, rather than Heller's. By demonstrating that some of the key aspects of the anti-war sentiment of the film arise from the novel, which maintains an anti-war stance alongside its comedy, the film fails because it loses this juxtaposition. It is "too solemn and portentous for the modest rewards it offers".

For Farber the novel and the film are understood as quite separate entities. The film makes use of a number of key aspects of the novel, but what is seen to be largely lost in the adaptation is the comedic aspect of the story. Even the shared anti-war sentiment is complicated. Because the novel is discussed in comparison with the film in terms of its comedic style it is possible to see the novel as being read as anti-war because it employs (or is a) screwball comedy. Conversely, the film maintains its anti-war stance in spite of its failure as a comedy, and failure as a film. In almost exactly the same way that the review begins by noting the differences between *M*A*S*H* and

Catch 22, the film is seen as perhaps somehow more anti-war than the novel upon which it is based, precisely because of its lack of comedy. This serves to deepen the divide between the novel and the film. Here, whilst *Catch 22* is regarded as anti-war like the novel, it does not share its screwball comedy, and whilst *M*A*S*H* does owe much to the novel in terms of its comedic style it in turn does not share its anti-war sentiment. Whilst the two films and the novel are clearly understood as related they are discussed far more in terms of what makes them different from one another than their similarities. Equally, when they do share attributes like an anti-war stance or comedic style it is, counter intuitively, regarded as being in spite of their different approaches or shared source material.

This sense of the films as related, but different is equally evident in a review for *Catch 22* which appears in the *Village Voice*, a newspaper printed for New York which gave far more space than the majority of other contemporary newspapers to reviews and discussions of the arts. Articles and adverts which are printed in the paper around the time of the *Catch 22* review suggest that the paper demonstrates a relatively liberal stance. Significant column space is also given over to discussion of films which were potentially less likely to receive wide releases. This is relevant because intuitively the *Village Voice* would be a prime candidate for the expression of any sense of the film as an anti-war allegory. Whilst making the assumption that individual reviewers will align their work with an overarching, if unwritten sense of a publications political position is problematic, a review of *M*A*S*H* which appears in the paper serves as a useful point of comparison between writing about the two films. It begins with a discussion of the way in which much of the resentment towards the Vietnam War had grown from roots lain in the Korean War. This serves to explicitly link the two wars, and thus *M*A*S*H*, set in Korea, becomes as much about Vietnam as the war which preceded it. The review does not understand *M*A*S*H* as an anti-war film, but as a "relatively

conventional service comedy". Whilst it is viewed as good, funny and moving the writer argues that the film does not display "controlled absurdism on the order of *Dr Strangelove* ..." or more significantly "... (who knows) the forthcoming *Catch 22*". (Village Voice, 1970:51).

In a later review appearing in *The Village Voice*, *Catch 22* is mentioned a second time, again with *Dr Strangelove* and again understood as potentially demonstrating an overarching absurdist theme (Sarris, A. 1970:47). This clearly has implications for the way in which the book was understood before the film was released, and the assumptions being made about how the film would deal with these themes (this is discussed in more detail later in the chapter). What is relevant here is that whilst *Catch 22* serves as a comparison for *M*A*S*H* in terms of the way in which it deals thematically with absurdity, the later review of *Catch 22* refers back to *M*A*S*H* only to argue that in comparison the film is more amusing. As such there is evidence here of two instances where *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* have been related to each other by contemporary critics in the same publication. The relationship is drawn upon quite different lines depending on which film is the subject of the review. Especially significant is the way in which neither of these examples understands the relationship between the two films along the same lines as more recent academic work, which views them through the rubric of their relationship to the Vietnam War. Whilst the review for *M*A*S*H* does contain some sense of this relationship, in the review for *Catch 22* it is not at all present, in relation to the film itself or as a point of comparison between the two films.

What is evident from these reviews is that there was a clear tendency to understand a relationship between *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22*. However, there is no evidence to suggest that there was a perception of the two films sharing an anti-war, or Vietnam War

agenda, and that the reality of this relationship was that the two films served simply as useful comparison pieces. Often *M*A*S*H* was invoked purely as an example of *Catch 22*'s perceived failings. So whilst this was sometimes framed as a stylistic comparison it is also a question of which film is more successful. *M*A*S*H* is almost universally discussed in terms which posit it as superior to *Catch 22*. As such, both the extent to which the two films were understood in terms of each other is potentially exaggerated in recent academic work, and more significantly, the mode by which this relationship was understood, when it was understood to exist, is one of multiples, rather than a simple shared view of war.

That a connection between the two films is made before *Catch 22* is even released, and that the way in which that connection is framed actually changes upon release only serves to make the relationship between the films more complex. That the complexity of the relationship has been lost over time is perhaps understandable given the nature of much of the academic work that understands the films in this way. The two films are frequently discussed via their perceived relationship with the Vietnam War in text book and overview historical contexts, whereas this is far less common in more in depth analytical work. The need to convey in a relatively constrained space the way in which the films are best understood can perhaps be seen as a necessary aspect of this type of work, and a key reason behind the development of this reductive view of the relationship between the films. What is less obvious though is how the anti-war aspect of the relationship developed when there is not a significant amount of evidence of it in contemporary reviews that relate the two films.

It has been shown in the first chapter that the academically prevalent understanding of *M*A*S*H* as an anti-Vietnam war comedy was not immediately present in the discourse surrounding the film, but arose slightly later in relation to ancillary events. The

discussion of *Catch 22* thus far has been predicated on the perceived relationship between the two films arising out of a similar, early discourse context. That is, that the films are seen as related now because they were seen as related by contemporary critics and that this is more an issue of the way in which that relationship operated being misrepresented. However, it is equally possible that contemporary critics discussed both films in similar ways, but that the connection between the two films was drawn only much later by the academic community. That is, is there evidence that *Catch 22* was understood as an anti-war, or anti-Vietnam War film even when it was not understood in relation with *M*A*S*H* and what is the impetus of those aspects of the discourse which are concerned with the film alone?

An emotional response: the novel and the film

On 15 June, nine days before the release of *Catch 22* Time magazine ran a story focussing on both the film and its director. The piece is a main feature in the magazine, comprising five pages including images. The front cover of the magazine is devoted to Nichols and a still from the film - Arkin as Yossarian, sitting naked in a tree. The cover is one of only three published in 1970 devoted to people related to the film industry or films, the other two being Jane, Henry and Peter Fonda (who share a cover) and Elliot Gould (Big Bird does also feature on a cover later in the year but the relationship with the film industry is debatable). Gans argues that "the nation is made up of such symbolic complexes as Government, Business and Labour, the Law, Religion, Science, Medicine, Education and the Arts" complexes that have also become sections in newsmagazines" (Gans, 19:1979). Broadly, this is the way in which the covers for Time are demarcated throughout 1970 both in terms of the proportion of covers devoted to a given area and by subject matter. Figures from the spheres of politics and finance both domestic and international as well as international affairs (largely combat related) make up just under sixty percent of Time Magazine covers from 1970. The other forty percent are divided up between social stories (which are largely not associated with any

individual persons), and figures from the arts and sports. This speaks partially to the perceived role of the magazine as reporter of stories that carry with them a sense of having some serious political or cultural implications. The magazine posits itself as serious news outlet to which the arts and sports are seen as relatively ancillary. This means that the rarity with which the subjects of those covers which are related to the film industry appear makes them significant. The Fonda's, Elliot Gould and Nichols all have strong connections with the counterculture. Jane Fonda became increasingly involved in anti-Vietnam War activities throughout 1970, though she has at not this stage begun the overtly anti-Vietnam War Free the Army Tour (which commences in April of that year) but has been actively involved in anti-war and other political activism throughout the sixties. Peter Fonda has at this point taken roles in *Wild Angels*, *The Trip* and *Easy Rider*. These roles are frequently understood as having a strong relationship with the counterculture, and whilst work such as Biskind's *Easy Riders and Raging Bulls* (Biskind, 1998) and Lev's *American Films of the 70s* (Lev, 2000) explore this relationship in depth, it is perhaps best summed up Laderman's assertion that Fonda occupies the role of "icon of the counterculture" (Laderman, 86:2010). Nichols, who prior to *Catch 22* directed *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* and *The Graduate*, both notable in their attitudes towards sexual politics and in the case of the latter an (at the time) progressive attitude towards the depiction of profanity and sex, is held in similar regard. *The Graduate* especially is frequently understood as relating to "youthful dissatisfaction and rebellion against authority in the 1960's" (Christensen, Haas, 2005:140).

That these people specifically are chosen to appear on the cover of Time magazine can be understood in relation to a further symbolic complex "youth". Gans argues this is added to the existing set of complexes during the 1960s and 1970s through discussions of "[h]ippies, the anti-war protesters, the increasing use of marijuana and

changing sexual practices among the young”(Gans, 19:1979). Importantly, most of the other covers of the magazine from the 70’s which do not ostensibly fall within the dominant trifecta of the Government, Business/Labour and the Law can be interpreted within their relationship with the youth, or more, discussions of the youth. Dominant here refers only to Time magazine covers rather than a sense of these institutions being dominant in other publications, or society at large. The symbolic complex of youth” is most discernible in the May 18th cover which features the image of a young woman shouting in front of a stylized image of the White House and simply the word “Protest”. The youth complex is also visible in the way in which Jessie Jackson is understood specifically through the rubric of race relations (a further cover features an image of Jackson and the words “Black America 1970” (6th April 1970)) or the way in which heroin is posited as unambiguously the problem of “the young” (16th March 1970). The 17 August cover “How to Educate your Parents” is concerned with the generation gap and explicitly posits the youth or younger generations as holders of attitudes and ideas which their elders do not possess.

This is not to argue that Time magazine as an entity had some sort of disproportionate interest in the youth symbolic complex, or that the front cover choices had a specific youth agenda. It is however possible to see the (largely social) issues which were deemed important by the magazine as inextricably related to youth at this point in 1970. These covers were not chosen because they engage with youth issues, but they were chosen because they engage with issues that were perceived to be important, and that those issues in turn are related to youth. As such, it is equally possible to view Nichols, Arkin (as Yossarian) and *Catch 22* through their connections with this conceptual understanding of youth. Worthwhile not simply because of their appearance on the magazine’s cover as part of the small percentage of covers which are not ostensibly concerned with the more dominant complexes but more because within that small remaining percentage the dominant bias is in favour of covers that fit cohesively

with the idea of the youth symbolic complex. The ways in which the *Catch 22* cover relates to, and engages with the concepts which define the larger group then effectively become as important as its meaning in isolation.

That the page carries the banner "*Catch 22* on film", very explicitly draws attention to the fact that the concern here is not the book but the film. There is an assumption, which is also signalled by the decision to recognize the story on the front cover of the magazine, that *Catch 22* enjoys wide recognition amongst both TIME magazine's regular readership and potential readers at large. The line that demarcates the images to Mike Nichols and Yossarian is punctured as that of a celluloid film print. This again serves not only to draw attention to the fact that the concern here is the film rather than the book but also demonstrates that the image of Arkin/Yossarian is a still from the film itself. The text reads "Director Mike Nichols / War as Horror- Comedy". Nichols is clearly the focus here, his image dominates the page and the text marks him as significant. The reader can expect the article inside the magazine to be as much about Nichols as the film.

The second part of text "War as Horror- Comedy" denotes a second subject or concern but also reflects the images of Nichols and Arkin. They are arranged so they are looking at one another, Nichols smiling, Arkin with a more serious, even morose expression. Nichols is laughing at him, but he is not laughing back, watching is funny, but the reality is not. Equally, "War as Horror- Comedy" says nothing of the film itself. War could refer to any war, real, or imagined. This phrasing serves to shift the context away from the Second World War (or a fictional representation of that war) as depicted in *Catch 22* to relate article to the larger context of war in general. Though there is nothing here to suggest that *Catch 22* is viewed as an anti-war film, potentially the act of conceptually understanding war in general as "horror- comedy" is in itself an act of

subversion from way in which war is usually discussed. As a whole, the focus on Nichols, and the title text, suggests that the article is as much an exploration of the ways in which *Catch 22* with Nichols as director can be seen as depicting war as horror-comedy, as it is about the director and the film as separate entities.

William Paul refers frequently to *M*A*S*H* in *Laughing Screaming*, drawing out a number of tropes including anarchism, attitudes to authority figures and the sexualisation of women, marking the film as a key text. A number of these tropes are equally present in *Catch 22* but Paul is one of the few academics who does not relate the two films. It is useful to juxtapose this with Gehring's work, *American Dark Comedy*, which makes frequent references which relate *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* including relating the "bug eyed panting of Yossarian (Alan Arkin) and his *Catch 22* company after they meet the sexy companion of visiting General Dreedle" (Gehring.1996:30) to the broadcasting of sexual activities over the tannoy in *M*A*S*H*. For Paul, *M*A*S*H*, with its sexualised scenes, buddy protagonists and football game finale is an archetypal example of gross out comedy. Gehring however sees the film as dark comedy, and the discussion of *Catch 22* in that context, and its absence from the gross out context which Paul is discussing is symptomatic of how "horror-comedy" is seen to operate for Time Magazine. *Catch 22*, with its portrayals of the dying wounded, a horrific mutilation-by-aircraft and its bombings feels like it could be present in Paul's work. However, Paul makes no mention of the similarly gruesome surgery scenes in *M*A*S*H* because it is these scenes, with their realistic depictions of war and its aftermath that introduce horror to these films. Whilst the surgery scenes in *M*A*S*H* are repulsive, they cannot contribute to an understanding of it as a 'gross out' film because their purpose is to stand in juxtaposition with the protagonists' other actions. In *Catch 22* the scenes serve a similar purpose, they remind the viewer of the true horror of war. However, rather than standing in juxtaposition with the actions of Yossarian,

they only serve to deepen his sense of fear. What these scenes also do, which the surgery scenes in *M*A*S*H* do not, and with the exception of the aircraft flashback, is have the potential to make the viewer laugh. In their absurdity, the bombing in its extravagance, and the plane incident with its perfectly dismembered body and comedic graphicness they are both horrific, and funny at the same time. With *M*A*S*H* it is not the surgery itself which is amusing, it is everything that goes on around it.

Inside Time magazine, the article is headlined “Some are More Yossarian Than Others”. “Some” without context can be taken as the population in general. The magazine is dated June 15th, nine days before the release of the film. Therefore, without seeing the film and as such perhaps not knowing who Yossarian is, or what he stands for (even, perhaps what “Yossarian” is) the article promises to explain this statement. Implicit within this is the articles promise to explain to the reader the extent to which they are “Yossarian”. This is borne out in the first paragraph. After a quote from the film and an explanation that the quote relates to a real life event which Heller experienced in WWII, and which is seen as the lynchpin of the novel the article sums up the story:

“it told of a bombardier named Yossarian impaled on the insanity of war and struggling to escape ... Undergraduates still see Yossarian as a lionly coward, the first of the hell-no-we-won’t-go rebels who had to go anyway. To them, the books final sentence limns the human condition as well as the heroes: “The knife came down, missing him by inches, and he took off” (Time, 1970:46)

The phrase “Hell-no-we-won’t-go” is associated with protests against the draft system, especially in the way in which the hyphens serve to highlight its status as a phrase more usually shouted or chanted in that context. Whilst protest against the draft is at the

time of the film's release certainly not a new phenomenon specific to the Vietnam War, these protests are larger and given increased media coverage in comparison with those protests which occurred in response to conscription during WWI, II and the Korean Wars. The reasons for this are manifold and speak to both a growing sense of injustice and inequality within the draft system, and to a more general opposition towards the war itself. After the Korean War changes were brought about in the way the draft operated which meant that college students in the top 50% of their class, and those working towards certain qualifications deemed to be in the national interest, were able to defer their entry into the forces (Foley, 2003: 37). This was seen as a move which appeared to create a distinctly stratified system which favoured the well-educated, and by extension, more wealthy sections of society. Throughout the 1960s the boundaries between the protests against the draft, and the anti-war movement as a whole became increasingly indistinct. The burning of draft cards as a symbolic gesture of protest became a regular occurrence that was consciously given a major role in anti-war protests (Foley, 2003: 48-49) by those who organised and attended them. That is, that protests against the draft are best viewed in not only the wider context of protest against the war itself, but as an absolutely integral aspect of them.

Equally integral to the coverage of these protests is the concept of the youth symbolic complex that the cover of Time magazine engages with. Kenneth Heinemans *Campus Wars* not only highlights the role of students in the anti-war movement, but also serves to demonstrate the extent to which opposition to the draft had inextricably linked the figure of the student to the movement in the minds of others. Heineman argues that whilst anti-war activities are common amongst students from a variety of differing backgrounds it is "secularized Protestant and Jewish" (Heineman, 1994:79) students who receive the lion's share of news coverage. These students were seen to occupy a privileged space free from the economic issues of their contemporaries, specifically,

they did not have to pay for tuition, or have to worry about the effect their actions may have on their post college careers. It is in this context that the identification of the people who view Yossarian through the rubric of protest and the “hell-no-we-won’t-go” attitude as “undergraduates” should be understood. This posits undergraduates as direct participants in protests against (the Vietnam) War. Inherent within this is a set of assumptions about the figure of the undergraduate. They are young and highly literate, but also, that those things carry with them a certain level of naivety. Because this group is frequently represented in the media throughout 1970 as dislocated from the everyday reality of having to complete their education and find a job their position on the war is also undermined. The use of “still see” and “to them” further serves to position the undergraduate as somehow inferior to the (Time Magazine) reader in their understanding of the novel and their relationship with Yossarian. In effect relating the book to the (youth) concern of protest against war is viewed as a misjudgement or misreading.

The undergraduate understanding the final sentence of the novel as a comment on the human condition is seen as equally invalid. The promise of the article is that that it will go on to explain why. Before this, another ways of understanding the novel are explored. The writer notes that it can be read as “[r]estoration comedy”; simply a (relatively) more contemporary setting shoehorned into an older form. It is argued that the critical community shared this view as it denounces the novel as “flatulent, self-indulgent and anachronistic”. Here then, to begin the article are two differing views of the book. The first, it is argued, involves an overstated and inflated opinion of the importance of the novel. The writer sees this as a reading that only a young and unsophisticated mind would make. The second, an anathema to the first reading, is presented as the position a more rational (and mature) reader would adopt, seeing through the complexity of the story to a core which cannot reasonably be seen to

reflect the human condition. Both readings are relatively disparaging. The article goes on:

"[n]early 5,000,000 readers nevertheless found it one of the most original comedic novels of their time, they found it so funny in fact that surely half of them ignored Heller's own warnings ... "the cold war is what I was talking about, not the World War"; and that the second biggest character in the novel is death."

The reader of the article is explicitly excluded from the group of readers who "ignored Heller's own warnings" with the word they. The reader is positioned, with the writer of the article in that smaller group; superior to the undergraduate and superior to the vast majority of readers of the novel in that they can, almost begrudgingly identify key themes of the novel not as anti-war, the human condition or even original comedy - but as the Cold War and death. The article then begins to extrapolate on these themes, particularly death, in relation to the film. The film is assessed in common critical terms, it is noted that the pacing is slow, that it is in danger of covering similar anti-war ground as *M*A*S*H* and *How I Won the War* and finally that in terms of how effective it is as a piece of comedy, the film is seen as lacking. This discussion, concerned with how successful the film is in terms of the expectations of its genre is immediately displaced by a discussion of Allan Arkins relationship with the character he plays (Yossarian). It is noted particularly that, by his own admission, the man and the character share a common worldview. "To Nichols *Catch 22* is "about dying"; to Arkin it is "about selfishness"; to audiences, it will be a memorable horror comedy of war". The piece effectively quashes any sense that its aim is to assess the quality of the film by distilling it down to "memorable" with the genre distinction "horror-comedy". That these assertions are so brief and lacking in evidence serves to demonstrate that the aim here is not to assess the quality of the film in a conventional review sense (insomuch as

there is a convention). Discussion of the film in terms of its genre in effect becomes superfluous to the apparently more pressing discussion of thematic concerns, specifically the thematic concerns of the people who made the film. Signalling this relatively early in the piece frees the writer to explore in much greater depth the ways in which the film can be seen to adhere to Nichols' conception of it as "about dying". This is achieved through an analysis of the way in which the film is deemed to be inherently cyclical. The on screen cycles, the hospitalized, paralyzed airman whose fluids are constantly replaced with those which he has already expelled or the flash back which punctuates the narrative, with each return growing lengthier, are understood as both reflecting and central to the basic dichotomy that is the "*Catch 22*".

The writer argues that "[o]nly twice does [the film] grow didactic", these two moments are less entrenched in the symbolic cyclical logic of the rest of the film. When a nineteen year old soldier confronts the 107 year old proprietor of a brothel about his occupation it is read as "[i]mmortal Italy v. vigorous but naive and supposedly doomed America. Clearly this ties into Nichols' supposedly primary thematic concern: dying. Equally, the second didactic elements come from the Milo Minderbinder plot, which culminates in Minderbinder arranging to bomb his own air base as part of a for profit arrangement, again explicitly relating the atypical logic of such a move to the danger which that bombing poses. This represents a betrayal of his fellow airmen that morally far exceeds war profiteering, in that it is inherently dangerous for those people who are unwittingly involved. That the wrongdoers of the film are exaggerated and caricatured is seen as a potential problem for Nichols as a film maker, in that he runs the risk of making a "substandard anti-establishmentarianism: capital is evil, war is inhuman; people are groovy" film. The implication that *Catch 22* represents something more than this is not only a tacit approval of Nichols, his direction and his assertion that the film is "about dying" but also a dismissal of *M*A*S*H* and *How I won the War*. The

implied danger of *Catch 22* "falling in line" in terms of its philosophy behind these two films is highlighted earlier in the article, it is because of Nichols adept handling of the material that it does not. Importantly though "falling in line" is a "risk" and a "capital is evil; war is inhuman; people are groovy" message is seen as undesirable. The use of the word groovy especially relates this to the hippy movement. *Catch 22* is seen to represent a film which could have been related to that movement, but that has risen above it to become something other, and somehow better than the ideologies that movement is seen to represent.

The remainder of the article seeks to relate this conception of the film to Nichols personally. This can only occur because Nichols has been established as instrumental in forging the film in this way, and thus can be viewed in relation to existential questions which surround his status as a director. The article explains Nichols status as a member of a Hollywood elite, a certain type of moneyed celebrity which is described both through the people with which he associates "Lennie and Jackie", "Gloria Steinem" and the things he owns "[h]is rolls waited obediently at the kerb". This description of Nichols lifestyle serves, via the notion of it being attributable to the "standard" reason of an "unhappy childhood", as the starting point for a lengthy description of his life. This begins at the point of his emigration to the U.S in 1939 - the apparent root of his unhappiness. Focussing primarily on his work in films and the theatre the chronology leads eventually to the making of *Catch 22*. This is described as superficially an extension of the lifestyle Nichols was seen to enjoy - slightly anarchic, enjoyable and decadent yet ultimately inconsequential.

However "underneath [the set of *Catch 22*] was one of the tensest, most gruelling areas since Anzio Beach" (Time, 1970:15). This tension is seen to arise largely because of the actions of Nichols on set "Mike has a funny blind eye when he works"

says Buck Henry. "He thinks everybody is always having a grand time ... but inside the command post the subtext is going on: an actor is on the verge of being fired; the lighting director isn't speaking to the director...". (Time, 1970:15) The comparison of that situation with that of Anzio Beach, and the use of the phrase 'command post' serves to imbue the situation with the gravity of a war zone. This comparison is chosen perhaps because the Italian location is a reflection of the setting of the film. Equally though Anzio was the scene of a battle which was drawn out, chaotic and carries with it associations of potential gains marred by bad leadership decisions. These are associations that were arguably more likely to have been recalled by readers in the 1970's than more recently. Nichols is quoted as "confessing" that he felt like he "was pregnant with a dead child" followed by a list of changes which were made to the film. "He pared easy gags from the script. He erased nearly 300 extras ... In the cutting room during nearly eight months of editing, speeches were shaved". Finally, seen to arise from this effort is a film which is viewed in relation to works of directors frequently understood as masters, Fellini and Kubrick, but is also by itself heralded as having the "force of a source- the kind of work other film makers will soon be quoting".

There is a definite transition in this part of the article from the fun and easy-going on set extension of Nichols' Hollywood lifestyle to the realisation that this in fact serves as a cover for a dysfunctional and traumatic enterprise which is ultimately transformed through the cathartic removal of various elements into something which works as a film. It is important that everything listed constitutes a removal or paring of some sort because a similar change occurs also in Nichols. The assertion that working on the film "helped me discover how I want to live-I'm going to get rid of myself in stages" makes a circuitous reference to both the content of the film itself and the experience of making it. The article draws a clear parallel between Nichols' rejection of the Hollywood lifestyle and his rejection of opulence in the film. Nichols makes a conscious decision to reject

the on-set antics of the Hollywood elite in the same way that he rejects large sections of what is seen as superfluous in the film. That this ultimately reflects the desire of Yossarian to escape the bureaucracy and madness of the War via the simple act of rowing his small boat away (an act not even encumbered by the common sense thought of the distance to the nearest neutral country). This ultimately underlines the reading of the film as engaging with what could be seen as far more existentially focussed questions. This reading is not entirely in opposition to the anti-war reading which the article attributes to the undergraduates who "still see Yossarian as a lionly coward...". However because it is in effect the catalyst which allows Nichols to save himself from his own opulent lifestyle, it is posited as a far more personal transformational notion that is in turn more powerful and meaningful than that anti-war reading. Because the article is written in such a way that very early on it aligns the reader with the writer (by effectively making the assumption that they are not going to share the ostensibly incorrect reading made by undergraduates) it makes this transformational discussion far more personal to that reader, who, by returning to the title of the article is invited to make comparisons between their own experiences, Nichols' experience and the film itself.

Most relevant here though is the way in which this narrative is presented as far more meaningful, and ultimately worthwhile than making an anti-war reading. Viewing *Catch 22* as an anti-war film is dismissed almost as a misreading because it doesn't sufficiently understand the complexity of the themes of the film. Though the article was published before the film was released to the public the comparison between the anti-war reading, and the deeper transformational reading, is actually a comparison between an apparently long held and populist reading of the novel and a reading of the more recent film. That is not to argue that the writer is presenting two different readings dependant on format, the article makes clear that the same two readings apply equally

to both novel and film by referring to the process of translation to film, however it does serve to highlight the fact that the primary focus here is not simply how well the film serves as a representation of the book - the film is presented as a sort of distillation of the ideas of the book, inextricably linked, but still a separate entity.

Vincent Canby demonstrates a similar conception of the relationship between the novel and the film, however the role of Nichols, and his own personal relationship with *Catch 22* is far less present here. For Canby the success of the film hinges on its ability to translate the novel to the screen. This is not so much with regard to conveying the story, location, or any other aspect of the novel accurately, but in the far more indefinite sense that the film accurately conveys "Yossarian's panic" which "emerges as something so important, so reasonable, so moving, and so funny." (Canby, 1970:9). That the film is not seen as perfect, but that "enough of the original remains" is equally suggestive of the role of the novel in the success of the film, what is important is that this arises because of the successful translation to the screen of the more existential, and personally emotional aspects of the novel. Canby ends his review "I hope it won't be confused with what is all too loosely referred to as black comedy ... *Catch 22*, like Yossarian, is almost beside itself with panic because it grieves for the human condition" (Canby, 1970:9).

Roger Ebert asserts in his review of the film that there is the potential for the adaptation of the book to film to become a manifestation of a very personal, emotionally significant experience, however he does not see the film as fulfilling this promise, a failure which ultimately leads to the film being a disappointment. Ebert argues that the film is "essentially a parasite, depending on the novel for its vitality" (Ebert, 1970). The reason for this is not only that the film fails to capture Heller's "tone, that delicate balance between insanity and ice cold logic" but because the film owes more to the anti-war

films which came before it than to the novel. TIME magazine warns of the danger of the film treading the same ground as *How I Won the War*, and Canby hopes that the film will not be seen as "black comedy". Ebert argues that this is exactly what has occurred. The anti-war aspect of the film is seen to be specifically the work of Nichols, as opposed to being present in the source material and for Ebert it is a cynical and lazy attempt to court fashionable themes.

It was asked at the beginning of this section if there was any aspect of these reviews which could be seen as holding the embryonic seeds of a sense of the film as an anti-Vietnam war statement. What the Ebert review represents is perhaps the clearest evidence for Cook's argument that *Catch 22* was seen as having been "spiked with anti-war rhetoric to enhance its youth appeal" (Cook, 2000:163). Especially in the sense that it is seen as something to have been cynically added by the filmmakers in spite of, rather than arising out of the novel. What is significant though is that throughout the TIME article, Canby and Ebert's reviews there is a clear understanding of the novel as the source of matters that are perceived to be more existential and fundamental matters than those concerning war. Ebert frames his rejection of the film on Nichols simple failure to understand that "for Heller World War II was symbolic of a much larger disease: life", whilst TIME views Nichols own personal engagement with the film as evidence of exactly that realization.

Whilst the discourse surrounding the film is far from as unanimous in its understanding of the film in terms of its relationship with the Vietnam War as, for instance, Cook would suggest, what these reviews do all have in common is a strong tendency towards discussing the film in terms of very personal emotional engagement with *Catch 22*. This arises out of a sense that the story is about some of the more fundamental aspects of life and death. What is significant is that this sense of a personal relationship with

Catch 22 is not associated with the novel or the film specifically but with the story itself, almost outside of those two things.

In turn, this is tied to how successful the film is understood to be. When the film is seen to succeed it is primarily because this translation from book to film is also seen to have been managed effectively. Likewise the film is seen to fail when more fundamental themes are not engaged with, specifically when they are usurped by those which are seen to be certainly more populist, but also perhaps seen as less significant. The way in which this concept of the film's success or failure is based around the ability or inability to adapt, or translate to the screen the key themes of the novel places that novel at the very centre of the discourse surrounding the film. These reviews represent evidence of contemporary engagement with the film which on a fundamental level relies on the novel as a way of mediating understanding of the film, and framing discussion of it. This is something that is clearly problematic given the relative absence of discussion of the novel and its relationship with the film in recent academic work. Significantly, this type of engagement with the novel is a major aspect of work completed very soon after the release of the film. This suggests a correlation between viewing the film through the anti-Vietnam War rubric and a reduced association with the novel. As with the tendency to relate *Catch 22* with *M*A*S*H* through a perceived thematic similarity the issue here is one of over simplification. The absence of the novel not only represents an oversight in terms of one of the key ways in which contemporary critics were discussing the film but also without it the source of the very personal, emotional relationship many of those critics had with *Catch 22* is lost. Simply acknowledging that this relationship is evident in these reviews goes some way to addressing this issue. What is of equal importance though is this sense of the role of the novel as part of the wider discourse surrounding the film. The area where ideas about the relationship between the film and the novel which run throughout the whole

discourse are most visible and clear is in the marketing for the film.

High Expectations: *Catch 22* and its Marketing

As with *M*A*S*H*, addressing the marketing of the film at this point in the chapter may seem counterintuitive, however the same arguments which applied to that film also apply here. The press book for *Catch 22* was published after the film was released and a large proportion of the advertising makes use of quotes from early reviews of the film. As such, temporally the marketing occupies a space after the film has been released and the critical community have begun to respond to it. Equally relevant is the way in which the marketing serves to construct and convey a mediated film identity, as discussed in the introduction. There is a strong correlation between the particular aspects of the film that the marketing makes use of and the ways in which reviewers discussed it as successful before its general release. This suggests a strong link between the early critical reviews and the marketing that goes beyond the marketing simply making use of that critical material.

There is far more material relating to *Catch 22* circulated prior to its release in comparison *M*A*S*H* or *Kelly's Heroes*. One simple reason for this may be that the production time was lengthier for *Catch 22* than those films. The press book exploitation program acknowledges this by stating that "[y]oung people have been anxiously awaiting Catch-22 for some time...let them know that, at last, Catch-22 is here" (Press book for *Catch 22*, 1970:4). One reviewer notes later that "[e]verybody I know has been waiting for this movie so long their beards have grown nearly a foot in the mean time" (Bogdema, 1970:4). This suggests that not only did the audience have a clear understanding that the film was taking longer than average to complete, but also that discussion of a film adaptation may have begun before the production of the film was even announced, after the publication of the novel. This sense of a "waiting" audience indicates that there was a clear expectation that the film would perform well,

this speaks both to the popularity of that novel at the time and the success of Nichols previous films.

Moving from the theatre, Nichols' first film *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* was an adaptation of a stage play. It earned five academy awards and after a wrangle with censors over the level of profanity in the film it became a financial success. His second film *The Graduate* was equally successful with Nichols earning an academy award for Best Director. The film topped box office charts for five weeks post-Christmas 1967 and into the first three weeks of the New Year. With the widespread success of these two films Nichols was a well-known director. A measure of this success is Nichols' inclusion in the book *The Film Director as Superstar* (Glemis, 1970:265-292) published in 1970. The book contains interviews with a number of high profile directors including John Cassavetes, Roman Polanski and Francis Ford Coppola. It is useful to contrast Nichols with Robert Altman, who had worked on a number of films before *M*A*S*H*. None of these earlier films had been especially commercially or critically successful for Altman. He had a history of television directing, but equally, none of those previous projects served to give him widespread recognition. There is a clear difference in the level of previous success between Altman and Nichols. The exposure that previous success generated for Nichols generated manifests in an equally clear contrast between the prominence in the marketing of *Catch 22* of Nichols and the lesser position of Altman in the marketing for *M*A*S*H*.

Advertisements for *Catch 22* prominently feature the line "A Mike Nichols Film" equalled in size only by "Allan Arkin" whereas Altman is far less conspicuously billed in the advertisements for *M*A*S*H*. There producer Ingo Preminger is surpassed only by the actors Gould, Sutherland and Skerrit in terms of conspicuousness. Equally the title of *M*A*S*H* is preceded only by "20th Century Fox Presents", with Preminger and the

actors names following. *Catch 22* however is presented as "A Mike Nichols Film" with "Alan Arkin in ..." suggesting that the director and actor can be seen as equally important attractions and selling points. This comparison is especially prescient because the main press book advertisements (that is, the largest available size used as the front cover of the press book) for the two films otherwise follow a very similar formula in terms of style and layout. Neither features the name of the film especially prominently choosing rather to foreground quotes from reviews. Whilst the quotes chosen to illustrate *M*A*S*H* are directly concerned with the film ("A cockeyed masterpiece - see it twice" (Press Book *M*A*S*H*)) the quotes used with *Catch 22* also praise the director and Arkin as well as invoking the novel.

As the title of Glemis' work, *The Film Director as Superstar* indicates, the level of success enjoyed by a director is not the only variable involved in whether their name is used in the marketing for a film. For instance the name of Brian G. Hutton, director of *Kelly's Heroes*, does not appear on any of the posters for that film despite the fact that he had directed four films before this, including the successful *Where Eagles Dare*. The prominent inclusion of Nichols in the marketing for *Catch 22* can be attributed to his star power, rather than simply the success of his previous work. The article appearing in Time magazine discussed earlier in this chapter, which draws a strong link between Nichols and the content of the film serves as an example of his perceived importance, as well as the perceived ability of his persona to sell (magazines). To explore exactly what it is about Nichols that meant including his name prominently in the marketing for *Catch 22* at this time would be to stray from the aims of this work. However, especially with the high profile controversy which surrounded *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* the star persona of Nichols can be seen as carrying with it the promise of anti-establishment excitement. Wyatt refers to this symbiotic relationship between the star persona and the marketing as pre-selling, the "personae ...and their previous films"

(Wyatt. 1994:131) serve to tell the prospective audience more about the film than the marketing would otherwise have done without their inclusion. This perhaps explains why Altman and Hutton are so absent from the marketing for *M*A*S*H* and *Kelly's Heroes* – Altman's oeuvre at the time is too minimal and genre diverse to give a cohesive sense of him as a director, whilst Hutton may have carried with him the aura of a combat film director, an aspect that those marketing the film might have wanted to downplay at the time.

Whilst it undoubtedly contributes to the way in which *Catch 22* is conceived of in its marketing, the qualities associated with Nichols' star persona are relatively insignificant in comparison with those which accompany the novel itself. A primary consequence of this is that comparisons between the novel and the film become one of the key ways in which its success is gauged, implicitly asking if the film lives up to expectations. William Wolf is quoted: "A superb imaginative and faithful adaptation of Joseph Heller's extraordinary book! It abounds with laughter". There is also an assumption of quality with regards to the novel. The film, when perceived as a faithful adaptation of that novel becomes imbued with that same quality by association. The novel was released in hardback in 1961 and was not immediately popular in terms of sales, and received mixed reviews; however, its popularity did improve significantly with the later release of the paperback version. The book was significantly more popular in England, entering best seller lists, which it had not in the US. Overall the book sold over 3,500,000 copies by the time the film was released in 1970 though it is unclear as to whether this includes all markets or just the US. (Press book for *Catch 22*, 1970:4). The film rights were bought by Columbia in 1962 and the film was in pre-production from this date. Because the film was released to a public which had potentially been aware of the novel for nine years, as well as on and off publicity associated with the film production there is clear motivation to put this awareness to use with advertising prior to the film's

release. In contrast with the marketing for *M*A*S*H*, in which the original novel is mentioned only briefly ("Ring Lardner, Jr, wrote the screenplay, adapting it from the best-seller by Richard Hooker, a pseudonym") as a means of noting the role of Ring Lardner Jr, and to emphasise the apparent need for anonymity for the writer, the novel of *Catch 22* and Heller's involvement is an integral aspect of the marketing and the construction of the film's identity.

The press book includes a section explaining the potential for the book to be used as a marketing tool, as well as the publisher's plans to increase book sales based on the popularity of the film. The section is headed "*Catch 22* - The paperback book of the decade" and begins "Dell books has launched what could prove to be the biggest motion-picture book tie-in ever with the release of the paperback edition". The use of "the paperback edition" carries the implication that this is the first time the novel has been released in paperback format. Whilst this is not the case, it was an entirely new edition designed to forge a strong link between the novel and the film. The artwork used for the cover of the new book is an image of the same set of dog tags and a medal as is used in the posters and advertisements for the film. The tag line reads "Now a superb Mike Nichols Film".

The book includes a list of the cast and crew of the film indicating that it is meant to be understood almost as an accessory to the film, including the cast especially allows the reader to match characters to the actors who play them. This relates again back to the extent to which the cast were known by the public at the time of release. Arguably a copy of the names of the cast and crew of the film is meaningless to someone who does not recognize the names it lists. The press book urges promoters to send copies of the book to "all important media contacts" - here the novel becomes a promotional tool designed to generate publicity for the film and the cast/crew listing becomes

especially prescient. This is also reflected in the price of the novel; at a relatively cheap 95 cents, it can be seen within the context of a push to get the book into the hands of as large an audience as possible. Whilst the press book notes that the publisher is planning a separate advertising campaign for the book, the way in which the promotional material utilizes imagery associated with the film, and refers to it directly on the cover means that the film is gaining widespread coverage any time the book is being promoted. Whilst the strategy is ostensibly designed to generate reciprocal interest in the film from the book, and vice-versa, the reality is that the book is acting as a form of billboard for the film whilst the advertising for the film refers to the book only to note the excellence of the adaptation. That is not to suggest that the film is not important to the advertising strategy of the book, but to note that there is an inequality in the marketing which suggests that the needs of film distributor outweigh those of the publisher in terms of the way in which the two are marketed, the novel is essentially published in service of the film in spite of its capacity to make money in its own right.

The attitude towards the novel here is that its quality is self-evident, and that seeing that quality can only lead to a desire to watch the film. However, that the novel is called into service in this way at all speaks to its perceived importance, signalling a clear understanding of it as a key aspect of the potential audiences relationship with *Catch 22*. Sending copies out to potentially influential members of the critical community is not just about the generation of positive reviews, but is also understood as a method of engendering discussion of the films ability to represent the novel. Inherent within this is an understanding of the novel as the key original text, and the film as subordinate to it in this regard. However, because the marketing calls the novel into the service of the film as a promotional tool, where it is given a new cover, a more accessible price point and a cast list, this cultural hierarchy is turned on its head when a commercial aspect is introduced.

A counterculture image: The film poster

The poster for *Catch 22* takes the form of a single large image of a bare male chest with dog tags hanging across it and a medal hanging below these. The image references a scene from the film where Yossarian is awarded a medal which he chooses to receive wearing only his cap, and would potentially have meaning for a viewer who had read the novel. To this very specific potential audience member the image carries with it both a sense of Yossarian's attempts to prove himself insane and also his largely ignored minor rebellions against the bureaucracy within which he is forced to operate. The plan to attend the ceremony naked marks for Yossarian what is perhaps the culmination of his frustration; the subsequent receiving of the medal in spite of this becomes a signal of the futility of his actions. The image viewed in this way becomes a symbol of both this struggle and of its ultimate failure. For the viewer who has not read the book though the image carries an entirely different set of connotations which are in some respects more quotidian. The bare chest paired with the dog tags is an image of a masculine military, the medal indicating success. However, the fact that the image is of a bare chest demonstrates a disdain for the military attire which arguably is incompatible with the sense of expectations of the military during WWII, and potentially has far more in common with images of soldiers in Vietnam. It has been discussed in the previously that images of the Vietnam War were far more widely disseminated during the conflict than those taken during WWII and the Korean War/ There was a far greater tendency during the Vietnam War towards showing soldiers in combat, but also in situations which did not require them to be in full uniform. For example the edition of Time magazine which carries the article about *Catch 22* and Nichols also carries a photo spread of images from the Vietnam War. These are full page colour images which show soldiers both relaxing and in combat (or immediately post combat) situations. Here the significance lies in the way in which the soldiers have augmented their uniforms with personal adornments, or are not wearing them at all.

This is not to argue that this is an association that would have been universally made when viewing the *Catch 22* poster, but to argue that the unconventional wearing of a medal attached to dog tags over a bare chest has much more in common with images of the Vietnam War than those of WWII, or other wars. Given the ubiquity of such images at the time of the film's release it is possible to argue that this would have been a key reference point for contemporary audiences.

This disregard of the convention in the armed forces to wear a uniform could potentially be regarded as subversive, and as such the image carries subtle counter-cultural connotations. In this respect the image can be seen to operate in a very similar way to the image employed in the marketing for *M*A*S*H*, and can be seen as an attempt to appeal to the same youth audience. Understood within a context which relates it to Vietnam War imagery and the counterculture it is evidence of the type of appeal to the youth market which Time magazine sums up as "capital is evil; war is inhuman; people are groovy". The image can also be seen as one of the key elements of the marketing from which an academic understanding of the film as relating to the Vietnam War can be seen to arise. The press book makes explicit the perceived appeal to the youth market in a section headed "*Catch 22*: An Exploitation Program". Herein it states that whilst the film has appealing aspects for those of any age the key audience, which the marketing should be focussed upon, is the youth. It presents a number of ways in which this might be achieved. Primarily the materials available in the press book are to be distributed, and made visible in areas seen to be traditionally frequented by the youth market: "discothèques, college student union buildings, campus bill boards" (Press book for *Catch 22*, 1970:6). Significantly, these are spaces frequented primarily by those of a certain age, the youth market, there is no desire to court the family, or child orientated market. This desire to court the youth market, with the single image used throughout, represents perhaps the clearest evidence of a concise, basic

understanding of the film as a youth orientated anti-Vietnam film. However, it is only in the posters, a small aspect of the overall marketing campaign, that the image is ever viewed in isolation (without quotes from reviews) and even here it may carry with it differing connotations for readers of the novel. To better understand the significance of the image, and ascertain whether this youth market appeal is present throughout all aspects of the marketing it is necessary to investigate the full range of material made available to promoters in the press book.

Its rightful place in the discourse: Emotion in the marketing

The image of the bare chest, dog tags and medal remains central in the newspaper advertising for *Catch 22*; however it is frequently presented with a white background, surrounded by quotes from critics. Whereas with *M*A*S*H* (the advertisements for which are of a very similar format) these quotes served to construct a relatively concise sense of the film as a modern anti-war comedy, the quotes used to illustrate *Catch 22* appear to be far more disparate in their focus. The result is that the advertising touches on many aspects of the film but seems on the surface to fail to draw these threads into a cohesive notion of what the film actually is. The largest quote, which dominates the main advert, as well as being used on its own in some of the smaller adverts reads "Catch-22 is the most moving, most intelligent, the most humane - oh, to hell with it! - It's the best American film I've seen this year!" Vincent Canby, N.Y. Times" (Press book for *Catch 22*, 1970:1). The quote makes no indication of the genre of the film, especially notable is the absence of terms referring to comedy or combat (both of which the quote makes no mention). Potentially this absence arises out of the popularity of the novel and an assumption that because the genre of the novel is already widely understood, that this would automatically be applied to the film.

There is significant evidence both with the other quotes used in the advertising, and within other reviews of *Catch 22* that it was widely understood both within the rubric of

the comedy genre and to a lesser extent the war/combat genre. However the main quote, aside from clearly indicating that the film is of a good quality, can be seen to have been chosen to highlight the more emotional aspects of the film. That the film is moving, intelligent and humane places a focus on the viewer's emotional reaction but also indicates that the viewer possesses a certain level of sophistication; intelligence and humanity, here carrying connotations of the high-brow. This sentence, which is presented as an attempt to break down into its constitutional parts what makes the film good, is self-consciously interrupted with the more colloquial, and potentially blasphemous "Oh, to hell with it!". The implication is that whilst it is possible to break down and understand precisely what it is which makes the film worth watching in more intellectual terms the process of doing so would be long and laborious. More than this though, with its use of potentially blasphemous language, there is the implication that this process might actually be seen to go against the counter-cultural stance of the film itself. Effectively the highbrow or intellectual is actively and bluntly rejected for the counter-cultural and unsophisticated. As with so many of the other aspects of the discourses surrounding the three films this work focusses on, this relies heavily on a pre-conceived cultural hierarchy. Here, one that values the high-brow over the unsophisticated. However, this hierarchy is subverted; the counter culture is seen as low-brow, and this is actually one of its more valuable assets.

By interrupting the sentence with the statement that it is the "Best American Film" the quote also carries the implication that the reason *Catch 22* has earned this accolade is first and foremost because it is moving, intelligent and humane, but also because it possesses many more attributes beyond these. Explaining, or listing what makes the film good would simply take too long - it should be accepted as so without the need to do so. That the quote is used alone on some of the advertising is important. For some viewers this quote may be the sole point of reference as they develop an

understanding of the film, and this viewer's perception of the film prior to viewing would be radically different to a viewer who may have been exposed to the wider advertising campaign, which featured a more diverse range of quotes.

The second most commonly utilised quote (in terms of use across the posters/adverts available in the press book) establishes the genre of *Catch 22* as comedy: "[i]t's one hell of a film! A cold, savage and chilling comedy" before arguing that the film "Firmly establishes Nichols' place in the front rank of American Directors". Again there is a dual purpose to the quote, it primarily serves to expound the quality of the film but also it makes a similar emotional appeal to the viewer as the Canby quote. It is explicitly stated that the film is of the comedy genre, however there are the additional attributes here of "cold, savage and chilling" - all words with strong, and usually negative emotional connotations. The use of these emotional words is potentially unexpected in relation to the comedy genre. This quote, which is often twinned with Canby's, seems to work to relate the often visceral, physical response to comedy - laughter - with another usually opposite physical reaction of 'chilling'. As such the film is depicted as an extremely emotionally charged comedy, a construct which stops short of indicating exactly what it is which brings this emotion to the film, but which does indicate that the comedy operates in tandem with more usually negative aspects. These are certainly bordering on, if not explicitly mentioning, the concepts of satire or even social commentary. Other quotes are equally opaque in their use of language. "'*Catch 22* is hard as a diamond, cold to the touch and brilliant to the eye!" - Time Magazine" essentially says very little about the film in terms of solid explanation of genre or themes. However, it does again indicate a sense of the film being seen as somehow significant and important. These quotes taken together construct the film as a relatively severe, emotional experience, and out of this grows a sense of the perceived importance of the film, essentially, it is comedy, but its purpose is not just to generate

laughter; it is seen as playing a more significant role than this.

The key quote in which this sense of gravitas becomes less abstract begins "'Mike Nichols' *Catch 22*, fiercely anti-war, irascibly anti-establishment, is black comedy." (Press book for *Catch 22*, 1970:1). Here the genre of the film is given as black comedy, a categorisation that is explicitly linked to its anti-war and anti-establishment stance. Fiercely and irascibly indicate that the film is almost confrontational in its presentation of these sentiments. Whilst they are included as much as indicators of what the film is in terms of genre as the statement that it is "black comedy", this categorisation ultimately overrides them. There is not the suggestion here that *Catch 22* is being marketed as an anti-war film, or anti-establishment in the same way that *M*A*S*H* may have been. That is, the anti-war and anti-establishment aspects of *Catch 22* operate within the genre category of black comedy, as opposed to constituting a genre category in and of themselves. The quote continues "[y]ou will get the message and you will be emotionally unstrung" (Press book for *Catch 22*, 1970:1). This is the most outright reference in the marketing for *Catch 22* to a conceptual understanding of the film as serving some purpose other than to entertain. Viewing *Catch 22* as the bearer of a 'message' serves to elevate the film beyond the realm of fantasy or storytelling and indicates a relationship with real world social issues. That the film and its message will lead the viewer to become "emotionally unstrung" serves, through its ability to invoke this kind of visceral reaction, to signal that the film is of a certain quality. Beyond this, because the emotional aspect of the film is tied to its message is also serves to indicate the magnitude of the issues with which it deals.

The decision to use quotes in this aspect of the marketing seems to have been made with the aim of presenting the film as concerned with important, emotional social issues but also to indicate that it is dealing with those issues in a way which reflects, or

resonates with that emotion. The issues are important alone, but a key quality of the film, indeed, the key selling point of the film, is that these issues are dealt with in an extraordinary fashion. The message is one of anti-war, and anti-establishmentarianism, the mode by which it is delivered is black comedy, which is executed in a cold but brilliant fashion to evoke the maximum emotional response from the viewer.

The three other quotes used for the main advertisement serve at least to some extent to reinforce this notion of the film whilst also indicating quality in terms of how amusing the it is: "...it abounds with laughter!" and how well acted "...Arkin's performance as Yossarian is great!". However, when taken together the full set of quotes used in the advertising construct a far more complex way of understanding the film than a simple exposition of quality in terms of how amusing, or well-acted the film is, and it is presented as especially multifaceted when it comes to genre. This does not represent a marketing strategy that foregrounds genre in any traditional sense. To some extent the genre expectation that a comedy will generate laughter is reinforced, however it remains that the focus is far too skewed toward presenting the film as emotionally significant to really convey a sense of the films genre beyond this. It is not possible to understand the way the marketing deals with genre in the same sort of simple terms as with the comedy focussed marketing for *Kelly's Heroes* or *M*A*S*H*, where the strategy made absolute sense when "anti-war" was understood as a genre category as opposed to a stance.

One of the consequences of this lack of focus on genre is that rather than being used to describe the film in terms of, for instance, how funny it is, the language used to discuss the film in the marketing is far more expressive. That is to say there is a difference between some of the simpler quotes used in the marketing for *M*A*S*H*, "Without a doubt the funniest service comedy I have ever seen" (Press book for

*M*A*S*H*, 1970:1) and the far less equivocally worded "Comes up like thunder! Marvellously impressionistic and real!" (Press book for *Catch 22*, 1970:1). The first functions by asserting the quality of the film through its genre, it stands out within the category of service comedies because it is the funniest of them. With *Catch 22* though the praise is not comparative, and does not rely on the film's success within any given genre conventions. What this quote and others (" *Catch 22* is, hard as a diamond, cold to the touch and brilliant to the eye" (Press book for *Catch 22*, 1970:1)) do is discuss the film only in terms of itself. Aside from the relatively broad category of American films Vincent Canby has (presumably) seen there are no reference points by which to measure the film. This is a marked contrast to the marketing for *M*A*S*H* which abounds with comparative quotes. Whilst this partially serves to give a sense that the film is very unique, it also carries the implication that *Catch 22* has transcended the actuality of film and become something different to that. The quote "Director Mike Nichols has created a work of art!" (Press book for *Catch 22*, 1970:1) supports this notion. Viewing the film as a piece of art makes the lack of comparative assertions of quality make more sense, it cannot be compared to other films because it is fundamentally understood to be above them in terms of artistic merit. Because the language which constructs the film in this way is the same language which gives a sense of the film as something to be engaged with on a very personal emotional level the two concepts are inextricably tied. In effect, here the film is understood as a piece of art because it is so emotionally accomplished, and equally its status as a piece of art serves to magnify its emotional appeal.

Whilst a sense of the artistic merit of *Catch 22*, and the lack of any clear explicit assertions about what the film is in terms of genre are common to all of the sections of the press book, these things are especially apparent in the promotional newspaper articles which are provided. Here, direct explicit discussion of the film is so nominal that

it is arguably completely absent. To discuss this better we step out of the chronology of the sources to 1971, by which time *Catch 22* had been shown in most of the major cities and is beginning to be picked up by theatres in smaller towns. Prior to its run at the Rialto in Missouri a promotional article is run in *The Southeast Missourian*. The decision to jump forward to 1971 here has been made because this article is an example of the way in which material provided in the press book was used to promote the films in a real world context, as such it represents something of a temporal anomaly, being present both in the press book, but also in a newspaper at a far later date. The article is taken from the second page of the press book and its use can be understood in that specific context. It is a piece written with the intention of being used to promote the film, which was subsequently selected from a larger set of potential articles, and edited to suit the needs of either the promoter, or more likely the space requirements. As such there are a number of layered decisions being made which have the potential to dramatically alter the way in which the article presents the film. Analysis of this article necessarily embraces both these aspects of its history. It is understood first as a product within a marketing campaign, and subsequently the consequences of editing, the potential process of choosing the piece, and the temporal context of the article are explored.

The article appears in the press book with a number of others of varying lengths, each with a different focus. Unlike the other posters and advertisements in the press book, which appear widely in newspapers throughout 1970/71 there is little evidence that the articles were all put to use during the initial run of the film. Whether the press book material is utilised or not, the book is still valuable in that it represents at least one person's, and more probably a group of people's notions of what the film is, what it is about and how it should be sold. The problem did not arise with *Kelly's Heroes*, *M*A*S*H*, or with the majority of the *Catch 22* press book, because there is evidence

that the material was utilised more extensively. As such, these articles are discussed here as context for the one article for which there is evidence of use. However this is always with the understanding that their place in the discourse surrounding the film is potentially far more limited than the one article which does appear far later in a public forum, the difference being both in terms of level of exposure and when they were written.

There are five promotional articles in the press book; each is accompanied by an image which also has a small amount of associated text. Though the wording differs very slightly in each of the articles the same basic line "a Mike Nichols film starring Alan Arkin, *Catch 22*". Presented by Paramount Pictures Corporation in association with Filmways, Inc., "*Catch 22*" is based on the novel by Joseph Heller" appears in all. This though is largely the full extent of discussion about the film itself. In the text there are none of the kind of genre signifiers which the single article which appears in the press book for *M*A*S*H* offers. Largely the images are equally ambiguous in terms of indicating the genre of the film with only one showing an explicitly comedic situation whilst the others could all be read in a number of different ways. Whilst the press book as a whole contains very little which indicates the potential genre of the film it is especially evident here that there is either a sense of confusion surrounding the genre of the film, or a clear assumption has been made that the reader will be sufficiently familiar with the novel to bring their own understanding to the film. The way in which the novel is referred to in all of the articles lends weight to this notion. Equally, as with *Kelly's Heroes*, the articles included in the press book could be seen to some extent to employ star power to sell the film as they focus exclusively on members of the cast. The longest article, titled "Cast of *Catch 22*" lauds film director Mike Nichols" clearly focuses on Nichols ability as a director, but also references a number of the more well-known cast members (Orson Welles, Alan Arkin) as well as some of the less well

known. Richard Benjamin and Paula Prentiss are also called upon to give opinions, both of whom play relatively minor characters in the film, and neither of which can be seen to be popular enough at the time to generate ticket sales through name recognition alone. Likewise, whilst there is one article which focuses on Arkin the other three articles are concerned with Jon Voight, Bob Newhart and Anthony Perkins, none of whom can at this stage of their careers be seen to be immediately recognizable stars.

As these articles take as their focus the actors involved in the making of *Catch 22* (or the director) they very clearly signal the film's constructed nature. The actors are discussed very explicitly in terms of their relationship with the film and the filming. There is some sense of the ways in which the various actors relate to their roles but equally prevalent is discussion of the more quotidian aspects of the film making process. An article titled "Filming of *Catch 22* insanity for Alan Arkin" refers to the potential psychological ramifications of the long location shoot. Comparisons are drawn between the Yossarian character and Arkin in these terms; however the main focus is on the real world plight of the actors as opposed to the more abstract struggles of the film. The articles about Voight and Perkins serve to strengthen the sense of the young actors overcoming adversity in to find their new roles, or coming into them via potentially unexpected routes. The process of casting is discussed in an article titled "Determined actor Perkins survives an image problem" (Press book for *Catch 22*, 1970:2), the point of which appears to be to highlight how "smart" the cast is, specifically Perkins. It is explained that he was in danger of becoming type cast, and as a way of escaping this fate was to choose to act against type in theatre. The role he eventually plays in *Catch 22* is seen as the next logical step in the move away from "[a]ll American boys; Neurotic young men" (Press book for *Catch 22*, 1970:2). The article concerned with Jon Voight also focuses on the casting process. It is explained

that he had no intention of playing a part in the film because he felt he was not right for any of them. The article continues: "when he was invited for a second reading, Voight decided to ask for the plum part of Milo Minderbinder expecting he would be resisted. Nichols second guessed him and offered the role first and Voight was cast" (Press book for *Catch 22*, 1970:2). These two articles, as well as to a lesser extent the much shorter one concerned with Bob Newhart, can be seen to represent the struggles of the less well known, and younger members of the cast. Perkins is shown to understand the potential dangers of type casting, and work towards solving the issue. Voight is thoughtful enough to feel that he may not be right for any of the roles in the film, but by putting himself forward for all of them he can be seen to have placed himself in the ideal position for his talent to be discovered. The two are understood as slightly adversarial and willing to take risks, but above this their stories hinge on their own intelligence, both literally ("one of the smarter ...") and in that both of their success stories are borne directly out of their own actions.

The way in which the articles together work to construct the cast as youthful, enterprising and most importantly, thoughtful, has the potential to be seen as reflective of the demographic the marketing is attempting to court. The way in which there were arguably far bigger stars, and older more established members of the cast, whose popularity is not drawn upon in the articles supports this notion. Moving on to the one article for which there is evidence of use in a newspaper context serves as the best example of a strategy geared towards the demographic of the young (probably) male who regards himself as thoughtful and emotionally intelligent. The article originally has the title "Cast of '*Catch 22*' lauds Film Director Mike Nichols". However this title is removed in the transcription used in the newspaper and replaced with "On the Rialto Screen" (The Southeast Missourian, 1971:15), a generic title used weekly on the entertainment page alongside similar articles for other theatres. Without the context the

title provides the article partially seems to read as relatively arbitrary praise for Nichols, whilst, as with the other articles, discussion of the film itself is extremely limited. What is significant though is that Nichols is discussed in terms which highlight his relatively short Hollywood career in relation to the success he has achieved in that time. Beyond this he is described as part of "the new breed" of film makers". Significantly the trademark of this new breed is the way in which their films are "marked more by attitudes than by tangible style". The parallels between the portrayal of Nichols here and the potential demographic outlined above are heightened by the way in which the article argues that the attitudes which pervade the films of this "new breed" of film makers are equally pervasive in their private lives. Though the language used is simpler, and the metaphor is assumed rather than fully explored the article is drawing very similar conclusions to the Time article which was published a short while before the press book, and nearly seven months before the article is published in the newspaper.

The purpose of this article, unlike the one which appears in Time, is to sell the movie. It does not rely on a simple assertion of quality though, or an appeal to any real genre attractions, but attempts to draw similarities between its target demographic and the film's director, who is in turn very carefully understood as having a very strong relationship with his films. Because this relationship stems from within the films the promise is that, as a young, successful, and more importantly intelligent viewer you, like Nichols, have something to gain emotionally from the film. This relies on a similar conception of the film to that of the critical community before and very early in the film's release. Because in those early reviews the perceived success of the film is closely related to its ability to translate the key themes, or to generate the same emotional response as the novel, it can be argued that the marketing campaign is drawing heavily upon those aspects of the discourse. There is a direct correlation between the way in

which the critical community views the film as operating most successfully and the chosen focus of the marketing.

This self-conscious engagement with the more emotional aspects of the film, arising out of the novel, as opposed to its genre, or (potential) anti-war stance is most evident in the "Exploitation Program" section of the press book. The third paragraph of which begins "[t]he controversial nature of the fantastic story of Yossarian, not to mention the heated debate that will be created among persons pro and con the depiction of Heller's legendary characters opens up several avenues for impressive publicity" (Press book for *Catch 22*, 1970:6). Within this are a number of implicit assumptions about the film. The first is that the film will be seen as controversial. This notion is quite separate from the second assumption, that the depiction of the characters will engender debate. Both of these assumptions rely heavily on the existence of the novel. The former in that reactions to the story are a known quantity, and as such are predictable, the latter in that without the characters of the novel with which to compare, the viewer has nothing by which to judge the characters of the film. This discussion of the controversial nature of the film is seen as an integral part of the potential marketing campaign, it is, effectively, something that for *Catch 22* is very positive. This relates to its perceived position as a product for, or arising out of, the counterculture – not only can it not avoid being controversial, it is actually something that, in its questioning of accepted hierarchies and cultural norms, must be embraced. In effect, controversy and debate are seen as potentially valuable aspects of the campaign, and promoters should do their best to court these things.

Genres, in terms of the marketing seem relatively absent with *Catch 22*. This is – perhaps because for those marketing the film it could not be seen as offering a set of attractions based within a notion of any particular genre save for perhaps comedy. A

relationship with the Vietnam War can be read in the image which the marketing makes extensive use of, though the power of this relationship is undermined when the image is understood in relation to the novel. Equally, the image is ambiguous enough to be read as relating to WWII as much as the Vietnam War. There are also cursory nods to genres in the use of quotes which indicate how funny the film is. Eclipsing both of these is an understanding of the film as an emotional, visceral conduit to personal and social issues, and, as discussed above, a potentially controversial counter cultural product. In comparison to the marketing strategies employed for *M*A*S*H* and *Kelly's Heroes* this is a relatively opaque conceptual understanding of the film. The marketing is still operating in a similar way to that which foregrounds genre, however this coheres around those notions of counterculture and controversy. Effectively it is still possible to understand this as a form of genre. It is equally possible to understand the trend towards driving a more emotional, and personal relationship with the film as filling that space which would usually be occupied by genre signifiers. The marketing can be seen to present the film as an emotionally involved, counter cultural piece of art. Viewed as such the marketing becomes far more cohesive and the lack of solid genre signifiers in the traditional sense becomes far less problematic. This way of understanding the film is not restricted to the marketing alone. What is apparent in the discourse is that some critics, especially those from whom quotes are taken for the marketing, were very comfortable with discussing the film in this way. The lengthy article which appears in Time magazine is an excellent example of the type of subjective engagement with the film that the marketing both draws upon, and is using to promote the film.

Success and failure: Post release reviews

In its complex, emotionally grounded conception of *Catch 22*, the marketing can be seen as quite different from the relatively simple, genre led campaign of *M*A*S*H* and *Kelly's Heroes*. Whilst this difference can be seen to arise out of one of the primary ways in which the film is understood as successful in the earlier discourse surrounding

it, the reviews of the film published after its release, and further into its run demonstrate a far more diverse set of criteria by which to measure the success of the film. There are some who do begin to view the film in genre terms and seek to assess it within that rubric. Equally, whilst the writing about the film before its release is relatively thoughtful and introspective, often related to personal responses to the novel and engaging with the more emotional aspects of the film, the post release reviews become increasingly polarized with far more reviewers discussing the success of the film in terms of its comedy. For example, under the headline "Black Humour Blasts War in Catch-22" (Rice, 1970) Rice begins by asking if satire, specifically the satire of authors, has any real world effect, does it "do any good". Ultimately the question goes unanswered, but what Rice does do is immediately relate the discussion to a sense of satire as a means of social change. It is argued that *Catch 22* is a "brutal, but at the same time hilarious burlesque on the whole lunacy of warfare" and that the film has a "serious purpose, which is to show war's idiocy". The mode by which this is achieved is "black comedy". This is a far more simplistic understanding of the film in terms of its engagement with social issues than previous reviews have demonstrated. This is potentially because the review is far shorter, there is no space for a lengthy exploration of themes and ideas surrounding satire, bureaucracy and the potential for a more personal engagement with the film.

As such, *Catch 22* is discussed by Rice as a black comedy which, whilst not explicitly described as anti-war, is certainly about exploring the more negative aspects of combat. This is the only thematic exposition which occurs. For the reviewer the stance has two possible outcomes. The first is that the film is not one which "everyone is going to like", however the "young people will go for it". The second is that seeing the film becomes a requirement for those who wish to "keep their end up in the chatter at cocktail parties". These two assertions go hand in hand to indicate that perhaps the

films stance on war is in fact not viewed as especially important. That a key reason for seeing the film is simply to allow better engagement in what is presented as quite frivolous conversation undermines any sense of the film being part of an important social discourse. The review, ultimately, is a positive one, however the key attraction is how funny the film is ("hilarious" "remarkably funny") whilst its position on war is not of absolute importance. However, it is seen as an aspect which some viewers will place more emphasis on than others. This seems counterintuitive given that the review goes to such pains to outline the films stance on war. Anti-war activity is something reserved for "the young", whilst those, presumably older readers of the review are invited to view this as an interesting diversion, but ultimately of no consequence.

The relationship between the youth and the anti-war movement is presented only when the film itself is being understood through the simplified rubric of anti-war sentiments. When the film is discussed in terms which foreground other thematic aspects, or understand it as emotionally important this type of default youth relationship is far less present. Rice's review has far more in common with the reviews of *M*A*S*H* than the others concerned with *Catch 22*, both films are understood as anti-war films, and this single, cohesive and coherent identity carries with it an accessible audience in the form of young people. In effect the review presents for the two different potential audiences for the film two different attractions, for the youth there is the seemingly inevitable pull of its social commentary, for the older audience the film is funny enough to be worth their time. That the review seems to specifically speak to that older audience perhaps explains the more simplistic way of understanding the film. Because the debate surrounding war is presented as essentially something which must be engaged with, but that is ultimately not that significant, the film is understood in those same terms.

Drew Bogdema's review of *Catch 22* is unfavourable to the extent that it is apparent

that one of the objectives of the piece is to provide entertainment through its derision of the film. The review is titled "Catch-22: It's a disaster", and this sentiment is repeated throughout. The explicit reason for this is that the film is miscast, and the majority of the review is given to explaining specific issues with given characters and the actors which play them. Because this discussion includes an overt affirmation of the writer's positive relationship with the novel, there is the implication that the miscasting issue is actually a manifestation of the way in which the film does not sufficiently live up to the standards of the novel. This is because the characters are not represented (by their respective actors) as Bogdena would expect. The "beautiful, diverse community of freaks that flew with Yossarian" are posited as an essential aspect of the novel and failing to portray them correctly is catastrophic. Importantly though this is framed here as an affront to the writer's very personal relationship with the novel. The assertion, made twice that "you're probably going to see it anyway" effectively sets the review up as a form of self-expression that marks it as different to those which ostensibly seek to help the reader make a decision about whether to, or not to see a given film. The implicit aim here is not to provide the reader with an overview of the film, to promote it, or even to indicate that it is so poor it should not be viewed, but to air a personal grievance against it. This personal grievance arises out of the difference between the novel, as a significant, meaningful experience and the film's failure to do that experience justice.

It is important that even in this review, which is relatively negative, and which discusses the film in vastly more simple terms than some of the earlier pre-release reviews, the personal, emotional response to the film is still the key primary way in which the film is discussed. As such these post-release reviews are very different in terms of the ways in which they understand *Catch 22*. They represent a spectrum which runs from an active engagement with the emotional aspects of the film, to discussion of it in terms of

more traditional genres. Both of these positions are present in the discourse surrounding the film to some extent, and the perceived success of the film can be seen as closely related to this spectrum. From the earliest reviews there is a strong tendency to tie the film's success to its ability to generate, and mediate emotional responses. It is seen as especially successful when it is engaged with upon a very personal level; when it is viewed as having an impact on real life situations. Conversely, the film is viewed relatively poorly when it is assessed in traditional genre terms. When it is understood as a comedy it is seen to fail for not being funny enough. Its 'anti-war' message is actually a complicated satire of bureaucracy, but as such is relatively unresolved and unsatisfying. *Catch 22*'s position in the film canon is based on a perception of it being an anti-war movie. However this work has shown that overwhelmingly this was not how the film was understood by the contemporary critical audience. Whilst the film is related to the Vietnam War, and the youth audience to some extent, this aspect of the discourse is far less prevalent than an understanding of the film which is tied very closely to the novel and personal emotional responses.

What is evident in the earlier academic work on the film is the gravitas the book carries and the need to assess the film's ability to translate this to the screen; this can be seen to have in turn arisen out of the critical discourse surrounding the film when it was released. Though it was not initially seen as such, the novel itself has become a member of the literary canon, a process which was beginning, but far from complete at the time of the release of the film. This has perhaps led to more in depth academic analysis of the film than its level of success would usually dictate. However the tendency towards understanding *Catch 22* in the academic context as an anti-Vietnam, or counterculture orientated film represents a subversion of these disparate threads. *Catch 22*'s ubiquitous presence in recent film histories speaks to the perceived importance of the film, but perhaps more to its status as adapted from a classic novel.

It also arises out of a long history of academic engagement with the film which has viewed it in a very similar context to that of most of the contemporary critical community, indeed; this represents a continuum.

The novels move into the literary canon may mark a turning point in the academic discourse surrounding the film, it becoming somehow more worthy of study. However, there is evidence that suggests that the film was being marketed towards the youth counterculture movement and was understood in this way by the critical community. This has been foregrounded in recent academic work over the far more persuasive evidence that the film was being understood in a way which focussed on its engagement with the existential themes of the novel. Perhaps the complexity of this conception of the film has meant that it has been overshadowed by the simpler, genre led way of understanding the film, or, more probably this is because it fails to dovetail nicely with a perceived moment within the narrative of the Vietnam War and the films place, often alongside *M*A*S*H*, within that. Making this connection between *Catch 22* and the Vietnam War, or the counterculture at the expense of the other ways it has been read is to lose many layers of the complexity which makes the film a worthwhile object of study. Clearly the anti-Vietnam war angle is of importance, especially in that it was viewed by contemporary critics as a potentially a bid to bring in the youth audience; however this work has shown that this was clearly not one of the key ways in which the film was discussed. By analysing the trajectory of the discourse surrounding the film within a number of differing contexts, as well as seeking to understand the potential relationships between those sources it has been possible to not only highlight a key aspect of *Catch 22* which is missing in recent academia, but also to go some way towards addressing that issue. The potential to argue that further work is necessary to explore the more existential and emotional aspects of the film is certainly there, however ultimately a significant body of work has already been completed in this area

by scholars working soon after the film's release. The requirement is more to return to this work, and the critical work out of which it arises when the film is discussed in the historical context and to re-attach this aspect of the film to the anti-Vietnam/counterculture understanding of it, to give a more rounded, representative sense of how it was being understood.

Conclusion

The impetus for this work stemmed initially from the theory that the dominant ways in which the films *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* were and continue to be discussed in the academic context are in many ways not representative of the range of (changing) responses that arose from within the critical community at the time of release, during their ongoing exhibition, and throughout their distribution and consumption. These potential differences between the critical responses and the academic discussion of the films were seen to be particularly grounded in genre. Their existence was also seen as a way to explore the perceived relationship between the films, the Vietnam War and the counterculture movement.

The ways in which *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* are discussed by the academic community, especially those works published more than a couple of years after the release of the films, are difficult to reconcile with the existence of a number of critical reviews published soon after the films were released that appear to understand them in very different terms. Because of this there is a sense that the academic community has overlooked some of the key ways in which *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* were being discussed when they were released in 1970. The two films are often discussed in the academic context as a pair. For instance they were seen, together, as addressing some aspect of America's involvement in Vietnam" (Lucia. et al. 2012:14) and as having "far more to do with the Vietnam experience—generally seen as a moral and military quagmire—than about World War II or Korea" (Pollard. 2002:126). They are also presented, within this understanding of them, as connected to the Vietnam War. This is as either particularly representative of the counterculture movement in Vietnam War era America, or as, not just reflecting, but contributing to an increase in anti-Vietnam sentiment after 1970. Cook argues that *Catch 22* was "spiked with anti-war rhetoric" whilst "[t]he anti-Vietnam subtext was even clearer in ... *M*A*S*H*" (Cook,

2002:163). As such, the nature of the relationship between the two films and the anti-Vietnam War counterculture as it existed in 1970 is potentially misrepresented in academic work. This has ramifications for the discussion of a significant aspect of American history, as related to film or otherwise.

However, this research aimed not just to identify and explore the potential differences between the critical and academic discourses surrounding these films, or to posit an alternative to existing readings, but to explore whether it is possible to discover exactly how those readings, and the differences between them came about. As such, this work asked how *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* came to be perceived as having such a strong relationship with the Vietnam War, the anti-war movement and the counterculture. Asking not just how this relationship arose, but also if it is possible to track the ways in which that relationship developed.

Within this question was an attempt to understand the ways in which the genre of the films has been seen to relate to their status as anti-Vietnam war films, or the development of this way of understanding them. Equally it asked what role the position of the films in the canon played in shaping those perceptions, or alternatively, if those perceptions had an impact on their perceived positions in the canon. It was understood that the exploration of these three aspects, the films relationship with the Vietnam War/counterculture, their genre, and their position in the canon were not discrete aspects of the project, but deeply interconnected.

Here *Kelly's Heroes* was introduced to the study. This was primarily because the Oddball character appeared, at least superficially, to be drawing on some key tropes (primarily the 'character' of the hippy) associated with the counterculture movement. Beyond this, in terms of its genre, release date, and potential target audience, *Kelly's Heroes* was a film which appeared to have a significant amount in common with *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22*. It also appeared, particularly in terms of its position in the

canon, to exhibit some potentially revealing differences. The study asked explicitly why *Kelly's Heroes* is far less frequently understood within the critical and academic community as being related to the counterculture movement in the same way as *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22*.

This investigation of the ways in which the three films have been discussed by the critical and academic community was longitudinal, concerned not just with those discussions at the time of the film's release, but also how they altered over time. As such, the study sought to explore the extent to which it is possible to discover and track the ways in which certain trends develop within the discourse surrounding film, encompassing both the impact of discrete events, longer term changes, and those notions of genre and the canon. In doing so this study demonstrates the value in a method which seeks to discover the ways in which films have been understood, and the impact of time and context on this.

In this conclusion we return to the original questions of how the relationship between the Vietnam War and these films developed, before looking at the impact that genre and the canon had in that discussion. The value in the method this work employs is then explored, before finally discussing the ramifications of both it, and its findings, for this and future work.

Genre, the canon and the counterculture: responses to the research questions

The research presented here is primarily comprised of qualitative analysis of the (largely written) outputs of the critical community. These outputs primarily appeared in newspapers and magazines as reviews and articles throughout 1970; however the study is not limited strictly to those sources either by time of publication or type/format. For instance, the research also makes use of sources that refer to the films more recently, such as the internet based materials pertaining to the Grit network. These sources were analysed and presented in largely chronological order. The conclusions

outlined below are drawn by tracing changes in the discourse surrounding the three films. That is, dominant themes, links and disparities between reviews and articles developing and altering over time. Reflecting the sources that are used, these discursive trails are not seen to be bounded temporally; they begin before the release of the films, and continue, partially in the academic sphere, to this day.

The first research question asked: how did *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* come to be perceived as having such a strong relationship with the Vietnam war, the anti-war movement and the counterculture, whilst *Kelly's Heroes* is far less frequently understood in this way?

It was possible to identify with *M*A*S*H* a relatively clear cause and effect process, a number of high profile events - the banning of the film, controversy surrounding its win at the Cannes Film Festival – which can be seen as playing key roles in the discursive development of an understanding of the film as being anti-war, countercultural or having a message or meaning that pertained to either notion.

Potentially it was the way in which the panel of the Cannes Film Festival were judging *M*A*S*H* against the other entrants at that year's festival, within a particular framework, that led to their eventual discussion of the film as anti-war. This was a marked departure from the way in which the film had been discussed prior to this. Whilst the discussion of the film in this way arises for the judges of Cannes when the film is compared to *The Strawberry Statement*, this comparison may not have been made at all were it not for the prior, public and widely reported, banning of the film from US Army bases. The reported text which outlines the ban does not indicate that it has been enforced because of a perceived anti-war stance, but because of its perceived negative attitude towards the military. This labelling of the film specifically as having or promoting an anti-war stance comes from those reporting the ban of the film, and Altman's attitude towards that ban, rather than those enforcing it. This represents a

departure not only from the previous discussion of the film within the critical community, but also potentially a relatively significant re-factoring of the reasons behind the ban.

The effect of the discussion of these events is compound; it is through repeated reiterations that these notions of *M*A*S*H* as anti-war or countercultural become dominant within the discourse which surrounds the film. A significant aspect of both the banning of the film and the controversy surrounding it at the Cannes Film Festival is that in both cases the language that is used to discuss the film is significantly different to the language that has been used to discuss the film prior to those events. The roots of this change can be seen to arise with those with an interest in the film which is arguably different to the interest that the critical community may have been paying it – those responsible for banning the film are not film critics – but there is evidence that these changes quickly have an impact within the critical community.

The existence of reviews published soon after the release of *M*A*S*H*, before it is banned from military bases, which make no reference to the film in countercultural or anti-war terms demonstrates that whilst this is a current dominant reading, there were other readings being made. Particularly those which foreground the films comedic aspects could have (or will in the future) come to occupy that dominant space. If then, the reading of *M*A*S*H* as countercultural/anti-war is but one of a number of likely readings, which came to dominate as a reaction to the ways in which the film was understood as a result of events ancillary to the film, we can ask why *Catch 22* is seen to share this reading whilst having no similar events within which to identify its origins.

At the time of the film's release, there is far more plurality in the ways *Catch 22* is discussed than with *M*A*S*H*. It was shown in the introduction that rather than academic work reflecting this plurality, the film is discussed in very similar terms to *M*A*S*H*, to the extent that often the two films are often seen as analogous. This is an issue with more subtleties than the clear difference between academic work concerned

with *M*A*S*H* and the earliest reviews about it, but it remains that work which categorises *Catch 22* as an anti-war film rarely acknowledges the complex way in which the critical community were engaging with the film during the first few months of its release.

The relatively widespread discussion of *Catch 22* before its release was a consequence of the popularity of the novel upon which it is based. The way that the release of *M*A*S*H* fell during the latter stages of production of *Catch 22* led a number of critics to draw out thematic similarities between the two films. This is something which was also possible only because the novel of *Catch 22* existed, and was popular enough to serve to provide these comparison points. For some critics there was a sense that *M*A*S*H* serves as an example of what *Catch 22* may have been when it was eventually released. For instance, one reviewer states that *M*A*S*H* displayed "controlled absurdism on the order of ... (who knows) the forthcoming *Catch 22*" (Village Voice, 1970:51). Here it is possible to see the roots of the current academic propensity towards viewing the two films as related.

However, when *Catch 22* was eventually released reviewers were not as inclined to view the two films as similar, and more frequently actually argue that there are fewer similarities between them than they had expected. One such review appears, significantly, in the Village Voice, the same publication that saw such potential in *Catch 22* when it was reviewing *M*A*S*H*. In this review the film is viewed as "never as funny as the funniest moments in ... *M*A*S*H*." This is evidence that whilst there was a tendency amongst the critical community to relate the two films, this relationship did not operate via a shared anti-war or Vietnam War agenda.

It was noted that the way in which this relationship was perceived may have been lost over time, leaving only the notion that the two films are linked. However, if this was the case the frequency with which other films, for instance, *Dr Strangelove*, were invoked

in these discussions (the film is mentioned in both Village Voice reviews) would suggest that they should also be understood as linked to *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22*. As such, the extent to which *Catch 22* was being understood as related to the counterculture outside of its relationship with *M*A*S*H* was also explored.

A relatively small number of reviews and articles were identified that did link *Catch 22* to the Vietnam War and the counterculture. These reviews potentially provide the basis for the more recent academic discussions of the film in these terms. However, the majority of these reviews, as well as those which do not link the film to the Vietnam War, also make reference to the novel. There is a strong tendency towards viewing *Catch 22* as a text which encompasses both its written and filmed form. The responses to *Catch 22* which arise within the critical community throughout 1970 were far more likely to discuss very personal responses to this multi-format notion of *Catch 22*, than to argue that it is explicitly linked to, or seen by a wider audience as linked to the counterculture.

One reason *Catch 22* and *M*A*S*H* have come to be seen as so unequivocally related to the Vietnam War by the academic community is because this aspect of the discourse surrounding the films was assimilated and perpetuated as a type of narrative. This narrative was discernible, if not dominant, in the critical discourse not long after the films were released. Through its repeated re-iteration it has been distilled into the relatively simplistic understanding we see today. It is perhaps this repeated re-iteration which has led to its simplicity, each iteration losing some of the complexity of that which precedes it. The simplicity of this narrative is also appealing – the two films have together been seen to both represent and reflect a cultural movement which has in many respects been glamorised and commoditized. One need only look at Thomas Frank's work around the selling power of the counterculture, and its pervasiveness

throughout the late sixties and early seventies (Frank, 1998) to begin to understand that potential appeal.

There are a number of key similarities between *Catch 22* and *M*A*S*H* which meant that they were frequently discussed together by the critical community throughout 1970. However, the nature of this relationship is one of the key aspects of the discourse surrounding the two films which has been lost. Whilst the critical community viewed the films as useful comparison pieces, the differences between them were as frequently noted as their similarities.

The original question asked why *Kelly's Heroes* has not come to be understood as relating to the Vietnam War in the same way as *Catch 22* and *M*A*S*H*. One of the key reasons that this question arose was because, as with *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22*, the critical community at the time of the film's release were connecting the films together. This connection, primarily (but not exclusively) based around Sutherland's starring roles in both *M*A*S*H* and *Kelly's Heroes*, is drawn as frequently by the critical community as the connection between *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22*. The second key reason this question was asked, and why *Kelly's Heroes* was originally included in the study, is because at least on a superficial level, primarily via the Oddball character, there would appear to be a significant amount of material that could be relatively unproblematically related to the counterculture in *Kelly's Heroes*.

Asking this question required an acknowledgement that those elements of *Kelly's Heroes* which were seen to dictate that there was the possibility of it being read as related to the counterculture were highly subjective. Identifying these elements was an exercise that was undertaken carefully, with the acknowledgement that it was, inescapably, a personal reading of the film. However, it did confirm that a number of tropes, primarily the Oddball character, did appear to be very specifically (even deliberately) related to the counterculture. These tropes primarily revealed themselves

not through some sense of overt 'counter cultural-ness', but through their juxtaposition with the Second World War milieu in which they are presented. Oddball and his men are identifiable as countercultural, not because they call themselves as such, or look or act in ways which mean they can be identified as hippies, but because they are very clearly not the same as the other characters which inhabit the film. It is this juxtaposition, rather than an overt identification of the Oddball character with the counterculture that was noted by the critical community at the time of the film's release

The overt nature of this difference, twinned with the way in which the plot of *Kelly's Heroes* is not markedly reliant upon it, raises the possibility that the inclusion of the Oddball character serves some other purpose than as a simple plot device to enable the completion of the heist which is central to the film. Oddball and his men were expressly included in the film as references to the counterculture movement. However, in spite of the overt-ness of this reference, there is no evidence to suggest that this relationship was being read by the critical community in 1970 as anything more than this – specifically, Oddball's attitude to the war he is engaged in is never read explicitly as metaphorically referring to the war in Vietnam.

For the critical community in 1970, what *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* have, which *Kelly's Heroes* lacks, is a sense of a genuine anti-war stance. With *M*A*S*H* this arises as a result of the military ban, and the comments of the judges at the Cannes Film Festival. With *Catch 22* it arises from the longer discourse surrounding the anti-war stance of the novel. The films are understood in such a way that they appear to exhibit, if not a purposeful sense of social responsibility, at least a genuine meaningful engagement with the anti-Vietnam War movement. This is not limited to the critical community discussing the films at the time of their release. It is something that becomes increasingly noticeable in more recent academic work as the notions of the counterculture, the anti-war movement and the potential that the two films were

reflecting or even contributing to these became bound together. With *Kelly's Heroes* this relationship is purely aesthetic, Oddball and his men looked and sounded like hippies (although even this was more than most critics at the time said) but their attitude to war was ultimately not seen as reflecting the ideals of the counterculture. This was something which the critical community also extended to their discussion of the ideals of the film as a whole, in spite of its perceived relationships with *Catch 22* and *M*A*S*H*, and its anachronistic tank commander, the film was ultimately viewed as an interesting mix of action and comedy.

The original question posed in the introduction to this work asked what impact genre and the canon may have had on the perceived relationships, or lack thereof, between these films, the counterculture and the anti-Vietnam War movement. The majority of the sources this work makes use of, especially the marketing materials, but also the output of the critical community, rely heavily on genre to operate. Genre is frequently the rubric by which the critical community were mediating their understanding of these films. With *Kelly's Heroes* the discussion surrounding Oddball that is so central to this work is one that understands the differences the character exhibits through comparisons with genre tropes and expectations associated primarily with combat films. For the critical community it was the action aspects of the film, or how funny it was - its performance against the expectations of its genre - that were key. This is something which was reiterated more recently in the genre based marketing of the Grit TV network. Similarly, for many critics discussing *M*A*S*H* after its military ban, and certainly for the academic community later, 'counterculture' or 'anti-war' was understood to be as much a genre categorisation as comedy or war, carrying with it a relatively unambiguous set of expectations and intentions. This genre focus is fundamental to the changes to the ways in which the film was being discussed within the critical community. That community was initially interested in discussing their views on the success of *M*A*S*H* by assessing how amusing it was, often discussing the

juxtaposition of this with its graphic surgery scenes, before later becoming concerned with exploring or asserting the film's anti-war credentials.

With *Catch 22* genre factored slightly less heavily in the marketing of the film than with *M*A*S*H* or *Kelly's Heroes*. It was primarily though the imagery the marketing used, which positioned the film as a countercultural product, which genre is primarily exhibited. Other aspects of the marketing, such as the quotes used throughout, and its utilisation of the novel drew upon the more personal, emotional connections that the critical community were making with *Catch 22*. The critical community were ultimately discussing *Catch 22* as a comedy, with discussions of its success hinging on the extent to which it was seen as satire, or black comedy. These genre categorisations, particularly satire, carry suggestions of social commentary. Because of this there is the implication with many of the discussions of *Catch 22* occurring during 1970 that the film is being measured based on the extent to which it can be seen as commenting on, or attempting to draw attention to wider social issues.

When the position of *Catch 22* in the film canon is discussed in this thesis, it is taken into account that this sense of the film as social commentary is inextricably linked to a perception of the novel in that way. The novel was, and continues to be perceived as an important piece of American literature. Whilst some critics argued that the film did not do the novel justice, there was a strong tendency towards discussing the book and the film in very similar terms – often responding to *Catch 22* in a more textually holistic way, as opposed to as a discrete book and film. The critical community was in essence discussing their own very personal, often emotional responses to *Catch 22*. These were responses which arose, or are perhaps possible because it was viewed as both important and meaningful. Again, this is a position which may be related to its categorisation as satire.

Catch 22's position in the canon arises out of this – *Catch 22* being viewed as meaningful, especially alongside texts which were perceived to be less so, such as *Kelly's Heroes*. The role that the novel played in securing the position of *Catch 22* in the film canon alongside its place in the literary canon is perhaps best understood in comparison with *M*A*S*H*. With *M*A*S*H* the novel upon which the film is based enjoyed, and continues to enjoy, far less success than the film, but as importantly, the novel was never discussed as an important text in its own right.

With this as a basis, when the canon is discussed in this work it is not purely as a metric of success, again, as evidenced by the relative financial success of *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* in comparison both with each other, and the novels upon which they are based. The canon is also a measure of prestige: it is related to attitudes towards the texts within, frequently the critical and academic communities that are viewed as, and view themselves, as qualified to assess the qualities by which prestige is bestowed.

The position of the films in the canon, as related to their relative success, and the sense of the extent to which they were and are viewed as socially important texts has impacted both the ways in which the films were discussed when they were released, and the ways they are referred to more recently in the academic community. *Kelly's Heroes* can be seen to actively court the counterculture audience, or an audience which is interested in the counterculture (but perhaps does not actively self-identify as part of it) via a number of genre tropes, a notion that is distilled in the Oddball character. However, because this is not seen to translate into a meaningful connection with the counterculture, it fails to enter the film canon, and subsequently is left out of further discussions within the academic sphere. *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* avoid this, becoming entrenched in the film canon, and securing ongoing attention within the academic community, by exhibiting a 'real' anti-war stance, or by comprising meaningful social commentary, respectively.

Starting points and goals: Responses to the literature

The conclusions outlined above highlight one of the key issues which led to this research, the difference between the ways in which the films are discussed in more recent academic work, with the ways they were discussed by the critical community at the time of their release. That this difference exists, and how it came about does not require further reiteration. However it should be noted that ultimately it is *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22*'s positions in the film canon which mean they are so frequently referenced in academic contexts which, by virtue of their uses, and perhaps necessarily, reduce their discussions of films to very simple outlines. *The Wiley-Blackwell History of American Film* is a good example of this type of work (Lucia. Et al. 2012). The purpose of demonstrating that the discussions of the films which appear in this context are relatively reductive is not to argue that there is no place for these works. Their discussions of the dominant ways in which these films have been or are understood are useful in the reference context. What is problematic is when work fails to fully acknowledge that the origins of those dominant understandings and the sources upon which they call are often found within potentially highly complex discursive landscapes.

This failure is most noticeable when quotes which originate within the critical community are presented as representative of the whole of that community, or, as sometimes occurs, as representative of the audience as a whole. Equally, when those quotes or sources are presented in isolation they also come to be, perhaps inadvertently, viewed as representatives for an entire discourse. This becomes especially problematic if, as occurs with *M*A*S*H*, significant changes within the discourse surrounding the film occur over time, ultimately affecting how it is perceived. Again, this is not to argue against the use of quotes from the critical audience, who arguably occupy a privileged position within the wider audience. It is to note that a degree of complexity must be lost in decontextualizing those sources, and within that complexity may lay a significant amount of useful information.

This issue is acknowledged in the final key question this work addresses. It asks to what extent it is possible to discover and track the ways in which certain trends develop within the discourse surrounding the films, encompassing both the impact of discrete events and the notions of genre and the canon. This thesis asked if it was possible to reclaim some of that complexity by understanding those sources more holistically, rather than via a set of privileged representatives which may in fact not be as representative as they first appear. As such, this final question was fundamentally a methodological one, asked with the intention of facilitating the development of a framework whereby tracking changes in discourses surrounding films is made possible not just for the three that this work focuses on but for any film text.

To begin to answer this question the works of Janet Staiger, Barbara Klinger, Miyako Inoue and Jason Mittell were explored. Staiger, Klinger and Mittell were identified as key advocates of the type of culturally contextualised work this research aimed to engage with. This was because their work is concerned with 'responses' (Staiger, 1992:91) to films, and using these to attempt to understand how "changing cultural circumstances bring about generic shifts" (Mittell, 2001:5). The research undertaken in this thesis upheld Mittell's assertion that the need was not to attempt to define the genre of, or categorise a given text but to "explore the material ways in which genres are culturally defined, interpreted, and evaluated" (Mittell, 2001:9). In its exploration of the ways in which for instance, with *Kelly's Heroes*, the studio, distributor, and eventually a TV network manage their promotion of the film, the work serves as a demonstration of the methodology that Klinger employs in *Melodrama & Meaning* being used to effectively understand the ways in which studios (and other players) "constructed meaning" (Klinger, 2004:37) around films. The research also explores how the films studied were (and are) perceived others, such as those in the critical community, or, as with *M*A*S*H*, within reporting of a military ban. Within this is the notion that those perceptions were, and are subject to potentially constant change. The

difference between the academic discussion of *M*A*S*H*, and the ways it was discussed by those reviewing it at the time of the film's release alone is enough to demonstrate the truth in this assertion. The methodology had to facilitate the tracing of "the solidifying pathways across which historical change occurred" (Wortham, Reyes. 2015:115) "to look at genre history as a fluid and active process, not as a teleological tale of textual rise and fall." (Mittell, 2001:10)

Mittell's work is concerned with how these changes manifest in the genre space. Referring specifically to television genres, Mittell argues that to "examine generic discourses, we should analyse the contextualized generic practices that circulate around and through texts. We might look at what audiences and industries say about genres, what terms and definitions circulate around any given instance of a genre, and how specific cultural concepts are linked to particular genres." (Mittell, 2001:8). Mittell primarily focuses on genres that are relatively widely used. Whilst a number of the categories that are focussed on in the research presented here, such as 'anti-war film', are less frequently used, or even fall outside of what some may consider to be genres at all (though this work does not argue as such) the shifts that this work traces are of very similar types to those that Mittell is concerned with. However, the research presented here can also be seen as an example of the type of methodology Mittell expounds being put to use to trace changes within discourses that revolve around aspects other than genre, drawing in notions such as the film canon and perceptions of social responsibility or success. The research presented here demonstrates that this method yields useful results when not limited to particular genres or genre in general, and that it need not be applied only to texts made for television.

Mittell argues that there are clear benefits to "emphasizing breadth over depth and collecting as many discursive instances surrounding a given instance of generic process as we can" (Mittell, 2001:17). As discussed above, in this work this was

expanded to engage with discursive instances outside of the rubric of genre, calling on the methodological work of Staiger and Klinger to draw in elements which allowed exploration of the films positions within broader discursive landscapes, encompassing things like the canon and stars. Returning to the notion of the exploration of texts as the “observable product[s] of interaction” (discussed in the methodology section of this thesis) and “discourse to mean the process of interaction itself” (Talbot. 2007:9), the importance of the relationships between texts is emphasised. Viewing texts, or more specifically, the relationships between texts in this way meant that the focus could be (and was) dictated by those relationships. Mittell argues for the value of understanding discursive instances in context with each other whilst also noting the value in relating them to their wider cultural milieu, again via those texts which convey information about that cultural milieu, those “observable product[s] of interaction.” Here, as with Inoue’s work on language and gender (2009), it is the relationships *between* the texts which allows conclusions to be drawn about not just those two texts alone, but also about the broader trajectory of the discourse of which they are a part.

However, as was identified in the methodology, the reality of undertaking the research in this way, with potentially such a broad range of resources and relationships to call upon, required that some limitations be addressed. These limitations were almost entirely practical, and primarily arose as a result of the 40 or so years that have passed since the release of the three films studied here, and the commencement of this research. The first of these required that what Mittell refers to as discursive instances, a phrase which is intentionally broad, was narrowed to written, and audio visual material. This concession was necessary because alongside a far smaller amount of audio visual material, it is primarily written material that has survived. The value of this material when exploring discourses is highlighted when it is compared with something like qualitative audience research. This would clearly give access to a wealth of information, but the need to remember (particularly over longer time scales)

engagement with a discourse at a specific time makes this relatively complicated. At a very basic level another key issue is that this research was undertaken in the UK, however, because of the Vietnam War connection, it focuses on texts which were published in the USA. To retain this context effectively with qualitative audience research (referring explicitly here to interviews or surveying audience members) would likely have required that the research be carried out in the USA. More presciently though, because the research is concerned explicitly with changes over time, the question of whether an audience member would be able to effectively recall or express changing attitudes remains. Written material has the issue of effectively existing both in the context in which it was originally written and in the context in which it is read, a human research subject has those same issues compounded by the many changing contexts that make up daily life.

Even as the types of sources this research has made use of were restricted, the emphasis on breadth meant that a potentially huge array of sources and texts could be called upon, which led to the question of scope. This issue was somewhat resolved because the research focuses on texts that were published a relatively long time ago, before the advent of the internet and whilst print newspapers were widely circulated. This meant that there were practical limits to what was available and accessible. Most of the sources made use of here were gathered electronically, with some key texts, such as the marketing material for all films found in archives, however were it not for the availability of digitised and searchable news archives this research would likely have had far fewer resources to call upon.

That this research specifically was limited in terms of sources by availability does not however, answer, methodologically speaking, the question of scope. Here the decision was made to prioritise those texts “which can be seen to have had influenced a large number of others, those which represent dramatic departures from prevailing

paradigms, or can be seen as especially representative.” This approach was largely successful, avoiding the need to list many similar texts, and keeping the number of texts the work refers to within reasonable limits. This does not represent a departure from Mittell’s assertion that it is preferable to “[collect] as many discursive instances surrounding a given instance of generic process as we can” (Mittell, 2013:25) , but serves to demonstrate that this is necessary only when assembling, rather than describing the narratives that those instances trace out.

This research demonstrates that it is possible to trace the changes that occur in discourses which surround films successfully. To do so requires that the sources that are used are suitably expansive. Sources cannot be effectively used in isolation for this purpose, and context is highly important. This, effectively, can be seen also as a response to the literature which initially spurred this research. What a number of the academic works discussed in the introduction often do is discuss *M*A*S*H*, *Catch 22* and *Kelly’s Heroes* in just one context - such as Cook’s discussion of the films as understood within specific genre categories, here, as “youth-cult” films (Cook, 2002:162). In these works context is seen to relate explicitly to the films, but not to the sources which suggest that they should be explored within those contexts. Effectively it is only by acknowledging those sources, and by exploring them more expansively with a focus on context, that the types of definitive assertions that these discussions make can be justified.

Again, this is to argue neither that there is no place for work that does not present extensive contextual evidence of its claims or that they should be replaced with work which comprises solely of the type of analysis undertaken here. This would clearly be impractical given the aims of, for instance (and as discussed above) reference history works. However, what this research demonstrates is that narratives around the films, particularly that they are seen as connected to the Vietnam War and the countercultural

movement, are presented as immutable truths, rather than as aspects of a discourse that have the potential to consistently, and dramatically change.

Discussion of *Kelly's Heroes* occurs, though not to the same extent as with *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22*, in work which discusses it within a number of different research contexts, but it remains absent from the reference history works referred to above and in the introduction. This research demonstrates that with *Kelly's Heroes* there has been (and continues to be) far more change in the discourses that surround the film. As such the absence of discussion of the film in the reference history context, but its presence in far more analytical work can be seen as at least partially to stem from the lack of a perceived, compelling, and easily defined narrative surrounding the film. Because there is a perception that it cannot, and has never been seen by an overwhelming majority of either critics or academics as (for instance) an anti-war film, references to it are far more enquiring, rather than descriptive.

Ultimately this ties to the position in the canon of these films, and their perceived importance. The perceived relationship with the Vietnam War, clearly a highly important historical event in American history has led to the inclusion of *M*A*S*H* and *Catch 22* in the film canon. Conversely, without that relationship *Kelly's Heroes* has been excluded. This research shows however that inclusion in the canon does not lead, as may have been expected, to an increased and holistic understanding of the ways the films were and are being understood, and that in fact it appears to have the opposite effect.

What would be useful were this research project to be started anew, would be a re-evaluation of its starting point. Beginning not with the films themselves, but with a specific moment, event or pivot point (in this case the Vietnam War) and asking which, and how film texts relate to it. Clearly the study of one or another film would be far more relevant, depending on context, but this would be informed by its actual academic value in that context, rather than pre-determined by its position in (or not in) the canon.

These two things: a context focussed and expansive approach to the sources and texts that research calls upon, and an effort towards beginning with those contexts rather than texts, would ultimately lead to a more holistic, and developed understanding of the relationship between film texts and the societies within which they are made, consumed and criticised.

Future work: Texts

Whilst this work primarily focussed on *M*A*S*H*, *Catch 22* and *Kelly's Heroes* for methodological reasons, there is certainly scope to expand the reach of the study to include a number of other films released during the Vietnam War. Both *Dr Strangelove* and *The Dirty Dozen* are referred to by critics reviewing the films studied here. The sequel to the latter, *Play Dirty*, released in 1969 and set during the Second World War, can be seen as thematically similar to *Kelly's Heroes* in that it sees a band of misfits (in this case a collection of criminals, recruited for their various useful skills) venture far behind enemy lines on a mission that is barely sanctioned by their superiors. Equally, its ending, which sees all minor characters shot or captured by the enemy, and the main protagonists killed by friendly fire is reminiscent of the bleak tragedy of *Catch 22*. Like *Kelly's Heroes* the film is barely present in academic work. Because these films, released throughout the 1960s to at least some extent inform the critical communities engagement with the later films researched here, drawing these works into a study would help to build a picture of the discourse surrounding war-comedy films and the Vietnam War as it developed.

However, whilst a key element of this study is the development of an increased understanding of the perceived relationship between film and Vietnam War, that conflict is not the only one that has seen the production of the type of war-comedy films that are studied here. Notable amongst these is *Three Kings*, a film that was released around eight years after the end of the Persian Gulf War in which it is set. The

relationship between the war and comedy genres is central to critical discussions of *Three Kings*. For instance, Roger Ebert writes ““*Three Kings*” is some kind of weird masterpiece, a screw-loose war picture that sends action and humor crashing head-on into each other and spinning off into political anger.” (Ebert, 1999) and Marjorie Baumgarten states: “*Three Kings* is a war movie with a conscience, an action movie with a funny bone, a caper movie with a shifting agenda.” (Baumgarten, 1999).

For some critics there are also similarities to be drawn between *Three Kings* and *Catch 22*: ““*Three Kings*,” an absurdist, gimlet-eyed “*Catch-22*” for the Persian Gulf war.” (Maslin, 1999). For others there were plot similarities with *Kelly’s Heroes*: “*Three Kings* combines macho *Kelly’s Heroes* fantasy and jabs at George Bush’s foreign policy” (Persall, 1999). The critical community also looked beyond these thematic or plot elements to draw out comparisons based within the perceived genre hybridity of the film: “Throwing caution to the desert wind, [director David O. Russell] tosses slices of *Catch 22*, Tarantino, Leone’s Spaghetti Westerns, *M*A*S*H* and *Saving Private Ryan*’s verisimilitude into the movie blender to create a violent, blackly comic, ultra-cool, anti-war satire.” (Nathan, 2000). That the critical community remains (in 1999) still very much concerned with the relationship between war and comedy, and are so active in linking this back to discussions of older films is potentially demonstrative of a broader development in the discourses which are explored throughout this thesis. Without drawing any definite conclusions, the ways in which the multiple genres of *Three Kings* are discussed by critics suggests that genre hybridity has become far more normalised by 1999, perhaps even expected, but that this film is successful because it specifically combines genres in a relatively unique or particularly successful way. *Three Kings* provides a route into exploring this process of normalisation, those discourses and their development over a longer period of time.

Three Kings has the added facet of returning to critical focus with the film's re-release during the Iraq War, alongside additional material which sought to explicitly draw out a relationship between the film and that war. Equally, the film has prompted extensive discussion within academia. As with *Kelly's Heroes* this is not limited in its focus to any particular aspect of the film and it is discussed in a wide range of contexts. For instance Ben Dickerson states that the film is a "confusing representation of resistance to the modern capitalist system" (Dickerson, 2005:181). This confusion arises for Dickerson in part because of the studios (Warner Brothers) apparent reticence to market the film as anything but an action movie, apparently belying its perceived commentary on the Gulf War. Hernan Vera and Andrew Gordon argue that within this apparently progressive commentary on American involvement in the Gulf the film is an example of a "white messiah" story - a problematic portrayal of a white "American hero who risks his life to rescue people of colour" (Vera, Gordon, 2003:49). Clearly throughout the 2000s there has been an ongoing and multi-faceted discussion developing around the film that is worthy of study not only because there is evidence that *M*A*S*H*, *Catch 22* and *Kelly's Heroes* played roles in that discussion, but because like those films, *Three Kings* has consistently been seen as related to two wars which remain highly controversial.

Especially with *Kelly's Heroes*, it has been demonstrated that the approach used in this work is robust enough to manage analysis of discourses which take place across relatively long periods of time. A study which begins to investigate *Play Dirty*, or *Three Kings*, particularly because of the links the critical community have drawn between them should not focus temporally on those films alone. This work would necessarily build upon the research presented here, making this study far more longitudinal. In Dickerson's work, *Hollywood's New Radicalism* (2005) he begins by discussing *M*A*S*H* in a chapter titled "[t]he inheritance", and ends by discussing *Three Kings* in a chapter titled "[t]he next generation". A more longitudinal study would not only serve to accommodate the potential ways in which the films studied here were understood in

relation to those that preceded and followed them, but would also serve to flesh out the overarching narrative that sees perceptions of progressive Hollywood develop. Finally it would serve to accommodate changing perceptions to war both with reference to films, and more generally. This is something which is likely not only to have an impact on the reception of films like *Kelly's Heroes* in comparison with *Three Kings*, but also begins to encompass wider ideas such as the role of patriotism in film, screen violence, and depictions of soldiers and enemies.

Future Work: Methods

The potential to extend the scope of this study is not limited to the films studied alone. It was stated in the methodology section of this work that one of the appealing things about using critical and academic writing from 1970 was the way that it gave access to responses written at the time of viewing. It was noted that this could never be seen as representative of the wider audience, but that the writers of these texts served as single voices within that. This had the consequence of restricting the voice of the audience to those who have, or have had the opportunity, to write about the films, and to have this writing recorded. Because this material is largely generated by the critical and academic community it must be understood within the context of that small but well informed audience. Equally, however that audience is conceived, even if they are not understood as significant within the wider audience, valid conclusions may still be drawn from their consensus or disagreement. That is, they become more useful as their number increases.

One key way in which this work may develop methodologically is to embrace the internet as a forum within which the opinions about films are being recorded by far wider and more diverse audiences. The proliferation of message boards, blogs, social media and cross media marketing means that far more opinions are recorded in an accessible medium. Because a large percentage of these opinions are given by people

who are not paid for them, and so are not, or do not view themselves as members of the critical community a problem of definition does arise. In the introduction to this work the notion that the critical community served as a particularly privileged segment of the wider audience was explored and some of the key issues that arise with sources that do explicitly come from within the critical community remain. The questions of perceived audiences for this work, why it is written (or filmed, spoken etc.), and what the writer gets out of it are as relevant here as they were with the sources this research called upon.

The marketing for all three of the films researched in this work made use of quotes taken from reviews published at the time the films were released. This represents the film-makers or the studios mediating the ways in which they want the films to be discussed from that point onward. The online space represents a far wider array of options for studios to exercise control over this discourse, from viral marketing, to message board seeding. The difficulty in investigating this is that many of these processes are expressly designed to be transparent – there is often no way to discern a ‘genuine’ user of a message board from a studio employee who has been paid to write positively about a given film. This is not to argue that investigating this would have to foreground those ‘genuine’ users over paid ones, the process in itself is worthy of study, but to argue that there must be an awareness of those processes and the impact they may have on how and why people are engaging with discourses.

As with the texts generated within the critical community that are used throughout this work, online sources are most valuable when understood not as discrete texts, but in context with each other. The volume of this information may mean that making meaningful arguments about how wider segments of audiences were or are viewing texts may be simpler than inferring out from the work of the critical community. It is, in effect a much larger community to call upon.

The digital nature of this information, and the nature of information which is made available on the internet more generally, means that the temporal aspect of the method may require re-evaluation. Unlike the majority of the sources utilised in this study, information made available on the internet cannot be understood entirely in relation to its published date. This information is often widely available from a given date, and can be accessed at any point after this, unlike articles which appeared in newspapers during 1970, which it is reasonable to assume were read soon after the publication of the paper. However, increasingly, especially with social media this information may have a far shorter life span, losing widespread visibility relatively quickly. For some outlets this obsolescence is an inbuilt and integral aspect.

This may require that a change is effected in the ways in which analysis of these sources is carried out. The digital nature of this data, as well as the amount of it that there potentially is to be studied, means that technologies such as text mining, particularly investigating the amount of times a given word or phrase appears across a corpus of texts, may become extremely useful. This could push this research into the realm of a far more statistical analysis, providing opportunities to investigate discursive trends in a different way. Clearly using this type of technology would require careful methodological work to avoid losing the inherent complexity in a given text. There is perhaps a strong argument for a combination of the kind of close analysis presented in this work targeted via a more data driven method.

One of the primary things that would be of interest with this type of study would be the key agents in a given discourse. It was identified in this research that discursive instances arising with certain groups or individuals were more influential than others. It may be possible to discover the extent to which the critical community influences the online community, and measure the flow of information (or opinions) in either direction. It would also be useful to measure the ways in which studios are influencing

discourses. It is possible that the type of event which saw a change in the discourse surrounding *M*A*S*H* could stem from within the studio itself in a much more obvious fashion, for instance by message board seeding. Such an investigation could add value to our understanding of studio advertising practices and their influence on discourses surrounding films.

This conclusion has demonstrated that *M*A*S*H*, *Catch 22* and *Kelly's Heroes* continue to influence our understanding of both the context within which they were released, and the ways we think about more recent texts. The study of the discourses which surround these more recent texts, in whatever contexts they may occur, is ultimately the study of that same continued discourse surrounding war-comedy films and their relationships with the cultures (and wars) they are made and consumed in. That this discourse remains not only relevant, but continues (and will continue) to persist, alter and perpetuate, serves to remind us that ultimately we cannot know the truth of film texts as fixed, whole and finished entities. We can however learn much from their relationships with each other, those that view them, and the contexts in which they are discussed and understood.

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